75¢

Hafa Adai!

Merry Christmas!

Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

www.saipantribune.com | THURSDAY DECEMBER 24, 2020 | Volume XXX, Issue No. 255 | www.facebook.com/saipantribune

PUBLIC NOTICE

Saipan Tribune will not be published on Dec. 25, 2020, and Jan. 1, 2021.

Essential worker tests positive

By JUSTINE NAUTA
justine_nauta@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

After being released for self-quarantine and approved for "Critical Essential Work" status, the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. made public last Dec. 22 that one out of two individuals tested positive for COVID-19 on fifth-day testing is a CHCC personnel.

See WORKER on Page 4

AT A GLANCE

As of 6pm, Dec. 23, 2020

GUAM	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	7,238	19	7,257
Recovered	6,668	39	6,707
Active	410	19	429
Deaths	120	0	120
Cumulative Number of Persons Tested		99,551	

SAIPAN	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	118	0	118
Traced via Travel Screening	92	0	92
Traced via Community Screening	26	0	26
Deaths	2	0	2
Cumulative Number of Persons Tested		22,633*	
Days since last community transmission		128	

*Total count includes the number of persons tested on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota.

*With guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CHCC has opted to not report active and recovered cases.

Source: Joint Information Center - Guam, Commonwealth Healthcare Corp

COMMUNITY VULNERABILITY

LEGEND:
- **Red:** Least safe
- **Orange**
- **Yellow**
- **Blue**
- **Green:** Safest

Source: Office of the Governor

TO AVAIL OF HOMESTEADS ON PAGAN

Bill removing 1-year residency to Northern Islands passes

FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The House of Representatives adopted Tuesday a bicameral conference committee's report that proposes to remove a re-

See BILL on Page 4

Rogolifoi-Omelau family wins 'Christmas Surprise'

JUSTINE NAUTA

Martino Omelau, sixth from right, and Pacific Rim president and founder of "A Christmas Surprise on Saipan" Keith Stewart, fifth from right, are about to cut the ribbon of the Rogolifoi-Omelau family's new home for the next two years in Chalan Kanoa last Dec. 23.

]By JUSTINE NAUTA
justine_nauta@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

After two years of living in a Federal Emergency Management Administration tent because their house got completely destroyed by Super Typhoon Yutu, a family of 12 was blessed with a three-bedroom home in Chalan Kanoa and a 2017 Ford Escape Titanium SUV, two days

See FAMILY on Page 4

A 2017 Ford Escape Titanium sits pretty with a bow on top in front of the newly renovated three-bedroom home in Chalan Kanoa for the Rogolifoi-Omelau family who was selected to receive these prizes from Pacific Rim's "A Christmas Surprise on Saipan," last Dec. 23.

House confirms Peter as CNMI's 1st female public auditor. PAGE 2

Apatang: Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! PAGE 4

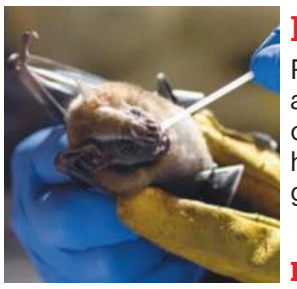
INSIDE

LOCAL
JSTA and its tourism partners kept to their annual holiday tradition with a cleanup of the main tourist district of Garapan.

PAGE 7

BUSINESS
Get 20% off on all items until today at Aquasmith, which is No. 1 place when it comes to up-to-date gear for spearfishing.

PAGE 17



ENVIRONMENT
Researchers in Brazil are on a mission to capture bats and help prevent the next global pandemic.

PAGE 22

SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

Local

House confirms Peter as CNMI's 1st female public auditor

FERDIE DE LA TORRE

Kina Borja Peter and her husband, Rep. Marco T. Peter (R-Saipan), along with some family members and staff of the Office of the Public Auditor, pose with members of the House of Representatives after a confirmation hearing Tuesday afternoon. The full House unanimously confirmed Mrs. Peter as the CNMI's first public auditor.

FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The House of Representatives unanimously confirmed Tuesday afternoon the appointment of Kina Borja Peter to serve as the first female public auditor of the CNMI.

This developed as the Senate's Committee on Executive Appointments and Government Investigations also held a public hearing Tuesday morning on Peter's nomination, in which she received an outpouring support from government officials, community, and the private sector. The Senate's Committee members have to deliberate first before coming up with a report.

The full House voted "yes" to adopt the recommendation of the House Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations chaired by Rep. Joel C. Camacho (R-Saipan) to accept Gov. Ralph DLG Torres' appointment of Peter.

Peter's husband, Rep. Marco T. Peter (R-Saipan), excused from the voting.

Mrs. Peter in an interview said she is excited and that she's glad to be back in the CNMI.

"This is an amazing opportunity. It's actually an opportunity for me to apply everything that I've learned, all the exposure that I've received to come back and help and serve the CNMI," she said.

Peter said the Office of the Public Auditor has to start looking at risk-based approach, deal-risk assessment with the financial audits that they have received, assess internal controls, and try to set up and define internal controls that will help prevent and detect fraud, waste and abuse with the government resources.

She added that one of the things that she has an interest is doing digital transformation with their office just to get more efficiency and productivity.

The committee in its report, which was signed by Camacho and eight other representatives, asked that the full House membership give its advice and consent to confirm the appointment of Peter.

Camacho said the Committee has examined all pertinent documents submitted related to Peter's overall credentials.

Camacho said the Committee also took into account all oral testimonies presented during the public hearing.

He said after much deliberation and based on the overall assessment of Peter's overall credentials, experiences, testimonies, and other relevant issues considered, the Committee is convinced that Peter possesses the necessary qualifications and leadership skills to serve as the public auditor.

The committee received 21 written testimonies and seven oral testimonies expressing support for Peter's nomination. No written or oral testimonies in opposition to her nomination were received.

The committee had a public hearing on Peter's nomination last Dec. 15 at the House's chamber on Capital Hill.

Peter earlier stated that it was her goal to eventually return to the CNMI and apply everything she had learned to help the government and the people.

"I want to contribute to the CNMI and serve the public's interest," Peter told the committee.

Torres appointed Peter last Nov. 25 to replace outgoing public auditor Michael Pai, who was appointed by former governor Benigno R. Fitial and served for the last 12 years.

Peter is a former senior finance leader, senior accountant, senior manager, and accounting manager for Boeing Co.

Press secretary Kevin Bautista earlier stated that Peter comes back home to serve the CNMI as a certified public accountant, licensed in the State of Washington, and has over 20 years of accounting experience with Deloitte, a big four audit firm in the CNMI and Seattle, Washington and most recently for Boeing.

link
THE SMARTEST GIFTS THIS SEASON
LINK your mobile & internet plan for as low as $95 and save a bundle!!
Samsung S20+
As low as $17.77/mo.
when you trade in your phone!
Up to 50% OFF
Select Samsung Smartphones!
FREE
Amazon Echo Dot, SuperPod & Basic Internet Installation!
Offer valid thru January 11, 2021. While supplies last. Some conditions apply.
Visit docomopacific.com/link for more information.
488-CARE
docomopacific.com
docomo pacific
Better Together

HANA
HEALTH MASSAGE
SERVICES OFFERED
▪ Body (Oil) Massage
▪ Foot Massage (with medicine)
▪ Cupping Therapy
(Suction cup massage for back pain)
SPECIAL PROMO
▪ 60 minutes Regular Massage $20
Locations: ▪ Across Kanoa Resort, besides Equitable Insurance
▪ MSV Building, Chalan Kanoa across Moonlight
9:30AM TO 11:00PM • MOBILE: 789-7778

Last of three 'ice' defendants is sentenced

By KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA
kimberly_bautista@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The U.S District Court for the NMI has sentenced the last of three defendants involved in smuggling methamphetamine or "ice" into the CNMI through the U.S Postal Service.

Manglona

District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona sentenced Elaine Francisco Demei to five months' imprisonment.

Demei admitted to picking up a package that contained "ice" from California at the U.S Post Office in San Vicente.

Demei will serve her five months sentence in home detention and will be placed on three years of supervised release. Demei was also ordered to perform 100 hours of community service and pay a $100 assessment fee.

Demei's co-defendants, Vince Koki Leon Guerrero and Evelyn Chong Tydingco, pled guilty to picking up the package with her that contained over 110 grams of methamphetamine.

Leon Guerrero and Tydingco were each sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment for organizing the deal and will also be placed on five years' supervised release after serving their sentence.

Mark Hanson represented Demei, while Steven Pixley represented Leon Guerrero and Robert T. Torres represented Tydingco. Assistant U.S. attorney Garth Backe represented the federal government.

According to Demei's change of plea, between Feb. 15 and 21, 2018, Leon Guerrero conspired with Tydingco and Demei to possess over 50 grams of methamphetamine with intent to distribute it to others on Saipan.

The package containing methamphetamine was sent from California and was addressed to "Debbie Lee."

On Feb. 21, 2018, upon arrival of the package, the three defendants picked up the parcel at the post office in San Vicente.

The methamphetamine in the package had a net weight of 110.03 grams and an approximate purity level of 100%.

Manglona said during Leon Guerrero and Tydingco's sentencing last month that the amount of drugs seized was among the largest the court has seen.

ABSOLUTE
YEAR-END CLEARANCE SALE
MANY VEHICLES UNDER COST! LIMITED TIME ONLY!
QUALITY USED CARS

2018 MITSUBISHI MIRAGE HATCHBACK
34,479 MILES
STK: 20H097A
SALE PRICE $7,995
KBB: $8,954

2006 TOYOTA TACOMA SR5
97,531 MILES
STK: 6P297
SALE PRICE $14,995
KBB: $15,495

2015 MAZDA MAZDA3 SPORT
18,543 MILES
STK: 20D137A
SALE PRICE $9,995
KBB: $15,497

2013 FORD TAURUS ECO
SOLD
SALE PRICE $6,995
KBB: $9,542

2016 MAZDA MAZDA3 SPORT
27,499 MILES • STK:6HS714
SALE PRICE $11,995
KBB: $17,303

2017 MAZDA CX-3 GT
4,550MILES • STK: 19D204A
SALE PRICE $14,995
KBB: $19,882

2017 HYUNDAI ACCENT GLS
16,979 MILES • STK: 7HS824
SALE PRICE $9,995
KBB: $13,650

2019 MAZDA CX-3 SPORT
11,103 MILES • STK:19HS981
SALE PRICE $12,995
KBB: $19,355

2018 MAZDA MAZDA3 SPORT
8,730 MILES • STK:8HS878
SALE PRICE $14,995
KBB: $19,449

2017 HYUNDAI ACCENT GLS
21,585 MILES • STK:7HS772
SALE PRICE $9,995
KBB: $13,463

2017 MAZDA MAZDA3 SPORT
34,789 MILES • STK:7R218
SALE PRICE $13,995
KBB: $15,129

2018 MAZDA MAZDA3 SPORT
11,625 MILES • STK:8HS884
SALE PRICE $14,995
KBB: $19,554

2017 HYUNDAI ACCENT GLS
54,175 MILES • STK:9H106A
SALE PRICE $9,995
KBB: $11,986

2017 MAZDA MAZDA3 SPORT
34,648 MILES • STK:20M094A
SALE PRICE $13,995
KBB: $14,967

2018 MAZDA MAZDA3 SPORT
7,910 MILES • STK:8HS875
SALE PRICE $14,995
KBB: $19,496

2015 MAZDA MAZDA3 SPORT
SOLD
SALE PRICE $9,995
KBB: $15,497

2016 KIA SEDONA LX
29,307 MILES • STK:6HS764
SALE PRICE $13,995
KBB: $19,154

2016 HYUNDAI VELOSTER HATCHBACK
39,217MILES • STK: 20H068-A
SALE PRICE $14,995
KBB: $15,830

2017 HYUNDAI ACCENT GLS
39,201 MILES • STK:7R220
SALE PRICE $9,995
KBB: $12,682

2019 MAZDA CX-3 SPORT
5,103MILES • STK:9P286
SALE PRICE $13,995
KBB: $19,946

2018 MAZDA MAZDA6 SPORT
7,365 MILES • STK: 18HS965C
SALE PRICE $16,995
KBB: $22,095

Customers First
TRIPLE J
TRIPLE J MOTORS
Beach Road, Chalan LauLau OPEN Open: Mon-Fri: 8am to 6pm • Sat: 8am to 5pm
Sales Office: 234-7133 • Parts & Service: 322-7134 autosales@triplejsaipan.com
PASSPORT to SAVINGS
TRIPLE J ADVANTAGE
WWW.TRIPLEJSAIPAN.COM
*On approved credit (OAC). Some conditions apply. Doc fees and registration not included. Cannot be combined with any other offer. Vehicles may not be exactly as shown. See dealer for more details. Maximum credit card payment toward vehicle purchase is $2,500.

Apatang: Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

By JUSTINE NAUTA
justine_nauta@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

As Christmas Day approaches, Saipan Mayor David M. Apatang and his staff want to wish the community a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year and to remember how fortunate we are in the midst of a tremendous change caused by COVID-19.

Apatang added that the change of directions that we had to make after Super Typhoon Yutu and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has "wreaked havoc in our quiet Commonwealth."

Apatang

"To say the least, no single household or business was not turned upside down. We are all struggling together and the climb out of the steep fall we are in now rests on staying unified," said Apatang.

Apatang acknowledges the federal government for assisting us at a time of need with disaster relief funds, the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance/Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation, as well as the CNMI's active military servicemen and women, first responders, frontline workers, and others who have made and will continue to make the sacrifices along the way to keep us safe.

Christmas isn't only for presents and material things, Apatang encourages the community to remember those who have gone before us and for all who have touched our hearts and lives, adding that he thanks the community for cooperating and adhering to the protocol in our fight against the pandemic.

"Let us continue to work together for a better possibility in the new year. Our warmest wishes for a joyous holiday season to families and friends living here and abroad. May God bless us all," said Apatang.

Apatang was one of the many who received the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine last Dec. 19 and highly encourages the community to take advantage of the vaccine it will help us from COVID-19.

BILL

From Page 1

quirement to have one-year residency to the Northern Islands in order to avail of agricultural homesteads lots that the Department of Public Lands has made available on Pagan.

With 18 representatives voting "yes" and only Rep. Franklin R. Babauta (Ind-Saipan) voting "no," the House passed House Bill No. 21-43, in the form of HD3, HS2, SD1, CCS1.

Rep. Joseph Lee Pan Guerrero (R-Saipan) was absent at the session.

The Senate had already adopted the conference committee's report.

Under the bill, an applicant must be registered to vote in the Northern Islands elections prior to applying and must either reside or have resided in the Northern Islands or be born in or be a descendant of a person born in the Northern Islands as indicated in a valid birth certificate or court document.

The bill provides that priority shall be granted to those born on or who are descendants of someone born in the Northern Islands.

Rep. Joel C. Camacho (R-Saipan), who introduced the bill in April 2019, said the conferees unanimously agreed to include the repeal and re-enact language to remove any perceptions of discrimination but yet prioritize those born in the Northern Islands or a descendant of such person.

Camacho said by inserting the language, the applicant can still avail of such homestead if they were residence or residing in the Northern Islands or born in the Northern Islands or are descendants of such individuals.

He said even if an applicant does meet those requirements, he/she must be a registered voter in the Northern Islands elections prior to applying.

Asked why he voted against the adoption of the report, Rep. Babauta in an interview said during the discussions of the bill it appears that there are still issues with eligibility.

Babauta said the eligibility is going to be a question from their constituents who have lived up in the Northern Islands in the past, have established residency in the past and now live here on Saipan at different districts.

"I think there should be more public hearings on to this one and listen to their concerns and how they can be eligible. And I think that is missing," he said.

In August 2019, after much deliberation and amendments, the House transmitted the bill to the Senate.

The Senate made some amendments and passed the legislation on Feb. 10, 2020.

On Feb. 18, 2020, the House rejected the Senate's version. House Speaker Blas Jonathan T. Attao (R-Saipan) then referred the bill to conference committee composed of Rep. Camacho as chairman and Reps. Luis John DLG Castro (Ind-Saipan) and Joseph A. Flores (Ind-Saipan) as members.

Senate President Victor B. Hocog (R-Rota) also appointed the Senate's conferees with Sen. Vinnie Vinson F. Sablan (Ind-Saipan) as chairman and Sens. Justo S. Quitugua (R-Saipan) and Sixto K. Igisomar (R-Saipan) as members.

The conferees met jointly last Dec. 11 and resolved their differences.

During discussions for adoption of the conference committee's report, Rep. Tina Sablan (D-Saipan) said they support this legislation, the clarity and the flexibility, but that the work does not end there.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

WORKER

From Page 1

As for the second individual, he or she was identified by travel screening and was transported to the government facility. The two positive tests raise the CNMI's cumulative total to 118.

According to a statement from CHCC, the individual was recently on official travel as a medical escort for severely and critically ill patients from Saipan to Hawaii, and the U.S. mainland.

The CHCC personnel is asymptomatic, meaning that they were not experiencing symptoms. Also, CHCC stated that the virus "may have been" incubating, developing slowly without signs, while getting tested on the first day, but was not able to be detected. CHCC's personnel was tested on the scheduled fifth-day testing and was then identified as a positive case and brought to the government facility which is the Kanoa Resort in Susupe.

The Contact Tracing Team was able to identify persons under investigation, or PUI, who were immediately identified as close contacts and were brought to Kanoa Resort for testing and monitoring. As of yesterday, test results have returned negative for COVID-19, but will be tested again before being released. Contact tracing for additional close contacts of the new confirmed case was conducted and is still being examined.

"As a healthcare worker en route from escorting several patients, the individual was approved for 'Critical Essential Work' status upon entry into the CNMI, and was tested on arrival. Upon receiving a negative test result for COVID-19, the individual was released for self-quarantine under stringent monitoring by the Contact Tracing Team," said CHCC. This means that CHCC's personnel was able to avoid the five-day mandatory quarantine, and was told to self-quarantine under strict monitoring.

Furthermore, CHCC stated that the CTT protocols include daily and regular monitoring for individuals categorized as a critical essential worker. This includes constant and regular physical check-in of the individual at their place of employment and residence,10 to 20 check-ins via phone including after hours. These steps are also implemented for all essential workers, CHCC staff or not.

CHCC added that no traveler is exempted from quarantine. The duration and length of quarantined are based on the traveler's information, strength of justification, and assessment of the critical nature of work.

An approved essential worker can avail to self-quarantine if they have tested negative for COVID-19 upon arrival. If self-quarantined, the approved essential worker should be at their own place with limited movement and barred from attending any unnecessary congregation.

Rumors shut down

Speculations that the CHCC personal was out a bar with friends last Friday were shut down by Far East Trading Co. Safehouse. In a statement by Safehouse, the company said that they have staff at the front door who monitors each customer, ensuring that they are signed in and have their temperature checked.

Customers at Safehouse are provided tamper-proof wrist bands that allow staff to identify that all customers have been through the screening at the front door. Safehouse confirmed that they have gone through sign-in sheets and video recordings from Dec. 19 and 20, and the person in question was not present at their bar.

"Like any rumor, make sure you have a source for your information before spreading it. As the information you spread might do more harm than help," said Safehouse.

Court orders IPI to participate in settlement conference

By KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA
kimberly_bautista@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The U.S District Court of the NMI wants Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC to send a representative with full authority to participate in a settlement conference for a sexual harassment case.

District Court for the NMI Magistrate Judge Heather Kennedy said the representative must be able to make an immediate decision about settlement without having to obtain permission to respond to settlement offers or consult with a person or an entity not participating in the conference.

Kennedy explained that the purpose of having a representative with full authority is to facilitate compromise and resolution in an efficient manner to maximize the time spent by the court and the parties in settlement negotiations.

IPI is also required to file a notice of compliance, supported by a declaration under the penalty of perjury, that the corporate representative who will attend the settlement conference has full settlement authority and it must be filed at least one day before the scheduled settlement conference.

A settlement conference is scheduled for Jan. 27, 2021 at 9am

According to court documents, back in September 2019, the U.S Equal Employment Opportunity Commission sued IPI for sexual harassment and unfair employment practices on behalf of Shirlene Loh, a VIP hostess, and other similarly aggrieved female employees.

IPI, in turn, denied all the allegations or inference in the complaint that it has engaged in any unlawful employment practices.

IPI has since asked the court to rule in its favor and dismiss the complaint with prejudice.

FAMILY

From Page 1

before Christmas.

Not only did the family of Martino and Audrey Rogolifoi-Omelau receive a house (free house rental for two years) and a car, they also got a fully furnished house with appliances, furniture, TVs, etc., car insurance for one year, internet service for one year, $800 payment toward utilities, and presents for the children. The house also comes with an outside kitchen with a nice barbecue grill. The total prize amounts to $60,000.

The first year of "A Christmas Surprise on Saipan" initiative was created by construction and real estate development company Pacific Rim Land Development LLC, in media partnership with KZMI 103.9FM and *Marianas Variety*. "A Christmas Surprise on Saipan" was announced last Oct. 27, and aimed to bring Christmas cheer, along with goods, services, or monetary gifts, to a family on Saipan.

Tomeko Kaipat and Vicente Reyes were the two individuals who nominated the family. According to Keith Stewart, Pacific Rim president and founder of "A Christmas Surprise on Saipan," the selection of nominees came down to two families, a pregnant mother with six kids who lost everything because of Yutu or a 19-year-old whose family lost their house and everything due to Yutu.

Fast-forward to two weeks before Stewart had to make a decision, they had realized that both nominations happened to be the same family nominated by two different people. A blessing in disguise, they said.

The "Christmas Surprise on Saipan" had a total of 150 nominations, but the Rogolifoi-Omelau won the hearts of Pacific Rim, Stewart, and his partners KZMI 103.9FM and *Marianas Variety*. Stewart, partners, and sponsors held a surprise reveal for the family at the house where they would announce that the Rogolifoi-Omelau won the house and the car.

The family of 12 pulled up to the scene, where they thought it would be a barbecue party, in a van where they saw family, friends, and a bunch of unfamiliar faces, which is why Martino Omelau was confused, thinking to himself that this must have been "a new barbecue place."

Martino Omelau stated that living in a tent was at times hard, but they survived. "I thank the Lord God is good," said Omelau.

Martino Omelau's son, Andruw Omelau, 19, who happens to be a soccer player and a staff under TanHoldings, stated that he had no clue what was going on, and was weirded out that there were many cameras pointing at him and his family.

"I appreciate this… I love the fact that they selected us for this, and gave us the opportunity to actually live in another house again," said Andruw. He added that his family has struggled for a really long time after Super Typhoon Yutu in 2018.

Andruw stated that he doesn't ever expect phones, toys, any material things during this time of the year, however, with this surprise, this is a Christmas that he will hold dear to his heart.

For his part, Jerry Tan, TanHoldings chief executive officer and one of the platinum sponsors of the event, said that after Yutu, as he was going around the island, Andruw was one of the places that he stopped by to check on.

Tan saw the Rogolifoi-Omelau's place had vanished, which amazes him that they were picked to receive the three-bedroom house and a car.

Customers First
TRIPLE J
Payless SuperFresh & Truckload Store
WHERE CUSTOMERS ALWAYS COME FIRST!
@paylesssuperfreshtruckloadstore
@paylesssuperfresh
(670) 234-1444

THIS WEEK'S CHRISTMAS SALE
DEC. 24-31

Payless SuperFresh & Truckload Store
Online Store!
www.paylesssuperfresh.com
We Deliver! • Shop Now!

ALL TOYS ON SALE
SALE PRICE 10% OFF

CERAMIC TABLE LAMP
SALE PRICE 10% OFF

YONARDO TOOL BOX
(TO-A19)
SALE PRICE $13.99

CHAMPION BREED
50 LB DOG FOOD
SALE PRICE $32.99

IGLOO SPORT
10 GAL JUG WITH CUP DISPENSER
SALE PRICE $72.99

ESI - BB BLUETOOTH WIRELESS METALLIC BLACK SPEAKER (BB778)
SALE PRICE $19.99

FOLDING DRYING RACK
SALE PRICE $16.99

BRENTWOOD 9.5 QT ALUMINUM PRESSURE COOKER
SALE PRICE $34.99

BRENTWOOD
7PC ALMNM/COPPER NS COOKWARE SET
SALE PRICE $39.99

BRENTWOOD
2.5-L 15 CUPS NS WITH STEAMER RICE COOKER
SALE PRICE $29.99

FIORA
PAPER TOWELS 6 CT
SALE PRICE $5.49

MARTENELLI'S SPARKLING CIDER
SALE PRICE $3.99

FRESHETTA
NATURALLY RISING 4 CHEESE PIZZA
SALE PRICE $7.99

FIELD ROAST BRAND
PLANT BASED PROTEINS
SALE PRICE 25% OFF

DAIYA VEGAN
SHREEDS MOZZARELLA OR CHEEDAR STYLE
SALE PRICE $4.99

BREW DR KOMBUCHA
ASSORTED FLAVORS
SALE PRICE $3.49

MEGA BUTANE
SALE PRICE 99¢

CERTIFIED ANGUS BEEF®
TERES MAJOR FILET
SALE PRICE $8.99 /LB

PINEAPPLES OR MINI WATERMELONS
SALE PRICE $1.49

FIORA TOILET PAPER 12PK
SALE PRICE $7.99

Customers First! Rewards Plus! Payless SuperFresh & Truckload Store

DOUBLE POINTS OF THE WEEK!
LOOK FOR DOUBLE BONUS POINT TAGS, CHECK YOUR RECEIPT FOR YOUR TOTAL POINTS!
Redeem points for ANY ITEM in STORE!
2X BONUS POINTS ITEM

BRENTWOOD
2-SLICE TOASTER 800W
GET 2X BONUS POINTS ITEM
SALE PRICE $16.99

CRYSTAL GEYSER
SPARKLING WATERS 1.25 LT
GET 2X BONUS POINTS ITEM
SALE PRICE $1.89 /EACH

SKYFLAKE CRACKERS
28.21 OZ
GET 2X BONUS POINTS ITEM
SALE PRICE $7.99

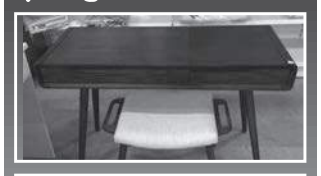
CHICKEN LEG QUARTERS
CASE 22 LB
GET 2X BONUS POINTS ITEM
SALE PRICE $12.98 /CASE

CARROTS
CELLO 1 LB
GET 2X BONUS POINTS ITEM
SALE PRICE $1.29 /LB

NOT YET A MEMBER?
SIGN UP!
IT'S FREE
**SOME RESTRICTION APPLY, SEE STORES FOR DETAILS!

Customers First! Rewards Plus! Payless SuperFresh & Truckload Store
SHOP » $1= 3 POINTS EARNED » REDEEM FOR ANY ITEM IN STORE!

GUANGDONG HARDWARE
Never satisfied until you are
NEW ARRIVAL
LAVATORY FAUCET, MIRROR, GARDEN TOOLS, G.I. PIPES, SQUARE TUBES, SHORING JACK PIPE, ROOFING TIN & MANY MORE ABS, CPVC, PVC, CONDUIT PIPES & FITTINGS ARE ALL MADE IN USA ELECTRICAL TOOLS, WATER HEATER & WINDOWS
NEW ARRIVAL
Furniture

Make a Difference for Your House!


NEW ARRIVALS!
VALSPAR PAINT
It's the suitable paint for the island climate. Makes your paint last for a long time!

LED LIGHTS
• Less money, 50% energy saving!
• More stable, bright, and fashionable!
• More longer and environmental protection!
Your Smart Choice!
G60 Rebar is Available Now!
CHEAPEST DEALER OF MAJOR CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL ON ISLAND!
P.O. BOX 501640, SAIPAN, MP 96950
TEL: (670) 288-2288/2289/6688
FAX: 288-4488
E-mail:guangdong_hardware@163.com
BUSINESS HOURS:
Monday to Saturday
8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
DISCOVER MasterCard VISA

CCC spent $164,705 last month; manager resigns

FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Newly appointed Commonwealth Casino Commission executive director Andrew Yeom disclosed Tuesday to the CCC board that for the month of November this year, CCC's total expense was $164,705.

For the month of October this year, CCC's total expense was $164,982.

At CCC board's monthly meeting held in CCC's conference room at Springs Plaza in Gualo Rai, Yeom said that from this total monthly expense, 73.25% was spent on personnel wages and benefits, followed by 16.44% being spent on the board and other compensation.

He said 6.07% was spent on office rental, and other expenses.

The executive director said the current head count of full-time employees is at 41, including their legal counsel, assistant attorney general Michael Ernest.

Yeom did not disclose about CCC's remaining funding.

Yeom

Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC has yet to pay this year's $3.5 million casino regulatory fee that is intended to CCC's operations.

Yeom also disclosed that Velma Lore, CCC's Permit and Licensing manager, has resigned as of Dec. 4, 2020 for personal reasons.

"It is certainly sad to see her go after being together over five years in building this thing basically from scratch. We really wish her the best of luck in her future endeavors," Yeom said.

He said they have appointed Frank Ada as an acting manager for the division until they find a permanent manager.

With respect to IPI, Yeom said IPI employees' payroll delay pattern has continued.

He said due to these repeated payroll delays, the U.S. Department of Labor has asked the U.S. District Court for the NMI to hold in contempt IPI's chair Cui Li Jie and IPI's chief executive officer Donald Browne.

Torres approves admin leave for non-critical government employees

» Torres, Palacios give holiday greetings to everyone

FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres has authorized the non-critical government employees to take administrative leave today, Thursday, in the spirit of the holiday season.

In his memorandum Tuesday to all department and activity heads, Torres said despite the challenges of this unprecedented year, the CNMI is blessed and grateful to be living in one of the safest places in the U.S. from COVID-19.

"This holiday season is always a special time of the year for rejoicing with our family and friends, for spreading charity and goodwill throughout our villages, and for giving thanks for all the blessings and little things in our lives," he said.

The governor reminded the people of the hard work and goodwill being done every day by doctors, nurses, first responders, COVID-19 Task Force, and government employees to protect the community.

Torres

Torres said to everyone who calls the Marianas home, he and Lt. Gov. Arnold Palacios are grateful to them for looking out for one another this year.

He said it takes a home, a village, an island, and one Marianas to keep the closely-knit community safe, and that the people did that together against all odds.

The governor said as they move forward with the COVID-19 vaccination of the community, they look forward toward achieving the common goal of rebuilding the economy and safeguarding the islands for the future.

Torres said as the CNMI closes 2020, he asked the people to renew the bonds and friendships with one another and be reminded that "we are one family working together to build a safer and more prosperous Marianas."

"From our families and our entire administration, we wish all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! Please have a safe holiday season, and continue to look out for one another," the governor said.

JSTA leads Garapan holiday cleanup

Despite a downturn in tourism in the CNMI and no international flights expected during the holiday season this year, Japan Saipan Travel Association and its tourism partners kept to their annual holiday tradition with a cleanup of the main tourist district of Garapan last Dec. 19.

The number of participating companies and volunteers also grew this year, with 71 volunteers from 22 companies joining the effort. Beginning at 6:30am the volunteers, including many children, cleaned up along the roadside and the beach from American Memorial Park to the Carolinian Affairs Office.

Joining JSTA in the beautification effort were Japan consul Kazuhiko Ono and his wife Masako, new consul Tomoaki Yoshise, and other volunteers from the consulate. The event was also supported by the Marianas Visitors Authority, H.I.S Saipan Inc., Pacific Development Inc., Pacific Micronesia Tours, Tasi Tours & Transportation, Himawari Kenbukan, Avenue Restaurant & Hotel, Hyatt Regency Saipan, S2 Club, Saipan World Resort, Mei Dive 1968, Aqua Resort Club Saipan, Northern Marianas Dive Operators Association, Super Fish Diving, HM Wedding, Oleai Beach Bar & Grill, Makesure Diving, Kendo, Aqua Connections, and Himawari Restaurant.

The cleanup effort netted over 300 lbs of trash compared to 200 lbs collected in 2019. ***(PR)***

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Over 70 representatives of 22 local businesses and offices joined Japan Saipan Travel Association in their annual cleanup of downtown Garapan last Dec. 19.

San Jose, Oleai, parts of Susupe to have water interruption

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. would like to inform the general public that there will be an emergency water service interruption today, Dec. 24, 2020, from 8am to 4pm, for customers in a portion of Susupe from the Department of Corrections south toward San Jose and Oleai to the Chalan Monsignor Guerrero and Chalan Pale Arnold traffic light intersection.

The emergency water service interruption is due to a 6-inch waterline leak located in the Oleai Elementary School campus. Repairs on the water main are anticipated to be completed by 4pm. Water service to the affected areas will resume thereafter.

CUC continues to work diligently to minimize any inconvenience to its customers. For more information, contact the CUC Hotline at 236-4333 or monitor our Facebook page for the latest updates (https://www.facebook.com/CommonwealthUtilitiesCorporation/). ***(PR)***

HERO RUN

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

IT&E employees, led by CNMI general manager Rose Soledad, ran their 5K for the virtual version of the 2020 JP Hero Run last Saturday. More than 20 IT&E staff took part in the run. Soledad said IT&E always participates and supports community events like the Hero Run.

ATTENTION
Government Employees & Retirees!

SAVE MONEY with the Island Smiles Discount Dental Plan. ENROLL TODAY!

- **Cheapest Price:** $5.00 (Individual Plan), $6.00 (Two-Party Plan) or $7.00 (Family Plan) per bi-weekly allotment. Cheapest dental plan in the CNMI.
- Members receive at LEAST **20%-50% discounts** on all dental procedures. No exceptions!
- **Plan Provider:** Paradise Dental Spa. State-of-the-art, full service General and Cosmetic dental clinic. Most experienced dentists in the CNMI. Really nice people and the coffee pot is always on! Great aircon and free WiFi.

Award-Winning Dentists kind and gentle
DR. NELSON KRUM
DR. RICHARD ARBUCKLE

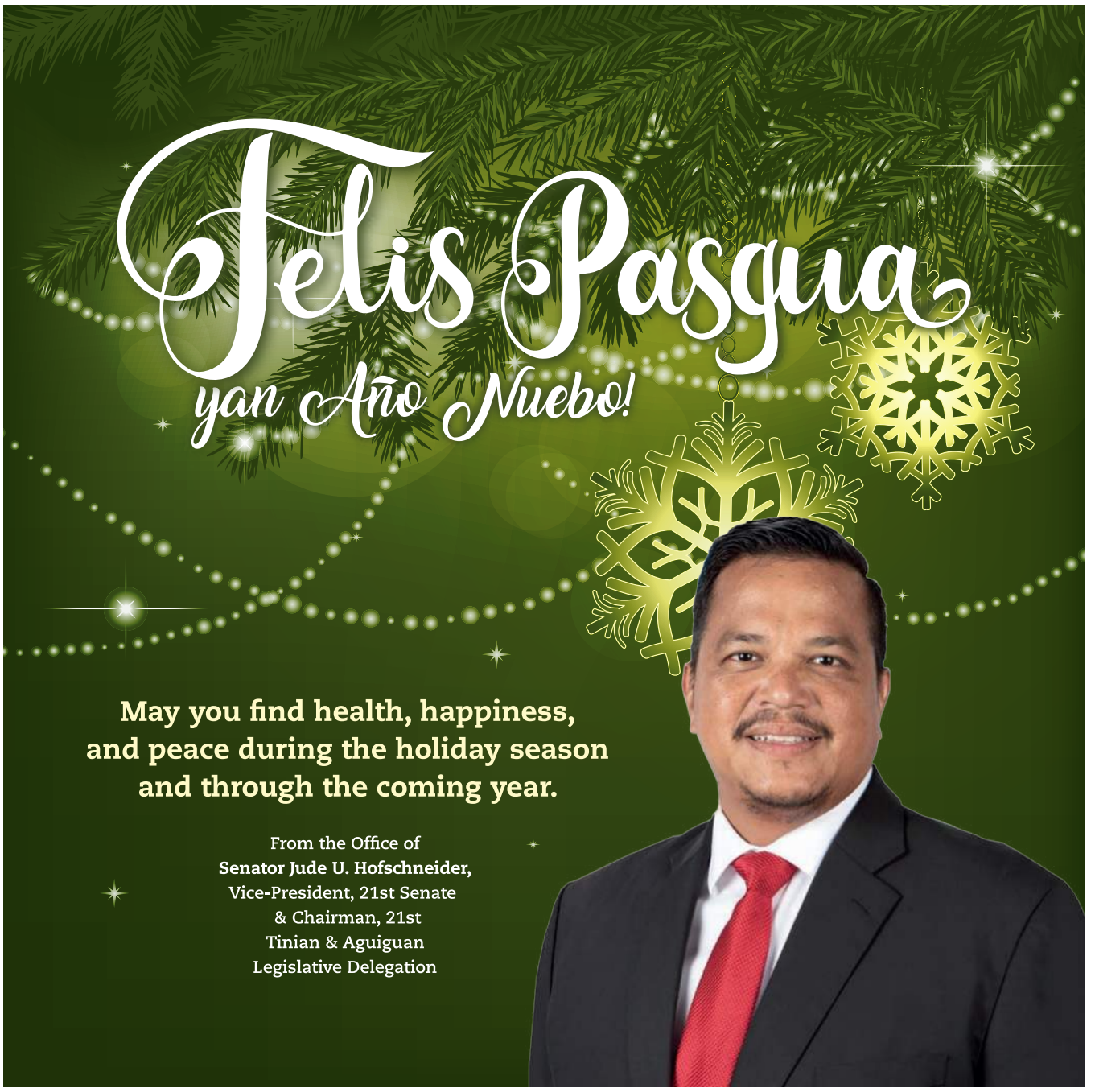
Paradise Dental Spa

Hawaii Dental Service, Take Care, Calvo's, Cigna, Staywell, and LHI Insurances also accepted. Medicaid patients welcome! Best Aircon on the island, and the coffee pot is always on!

Call 234-4040
Middle Road, Gualo Rai, across from Chong's Refrigeration

Stop by and pick up your enrollment packet or send an email request to paradisedentalsaipan@gmail.com

www.paradisedentalspa.com instagram.com/paradisedentalspa facebook.com/paradisedentalspa



Mildren S. Camacho appointed administrator of CNMI Scholarship

Camacho

The CNMI Scholarship board of directors recently appointed Mildred S. Camacho as the newest CNMI Scholarship administrator.

Camacho has been serving as acting administrator since the passing of former administrator Rose Pangelinan Camacho in October.

"On behalf of the CNMI Scholarship board of directors, we are very pleased that Mrs. Mildred Sablan Camacho accepted the appointment as the CNMI Scholarship administrator," said CNMI Scholarship board chair Geri DelaCruz.

"Mrs. Camacho is a living testament of one who believes in higher education. She earned her higher education degree during her tenure at the Scholarship Office. She has years of experience in this office with the primary role in compliance. Mrs. Camacho was mentored by the late Rose Pangelinan Camacho who led this office for many years. We are confident that Mrs. Camacho will carry on the roles and responsibilities of the CNMI Scholarship Office in providing financial assistance to students of the CNMI," she added.

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres also extended his congratulations to Camacho as she assumes this important responsibility.

"Congratulations to administrator Mildred S. Camacho for taking on this important role for our students pursuing higher education. I'm very proud of her accomplishments. Although she has big shoes to fill, I am confident she will continue the legacy of Rose Pangelinan Camacho and add to our collective vision of assisting our students," said Torres.

Camacho said she is humbled by the decision of the CNMI Scholarship Board.

"I am confident that I will lead this office and continue the mission of providing financial assistance for higher education and continue the legacy and passion of our late administrator Rose Sonis Pangelinan Camacho." ***(PR)***

Shell V-Power
TOGETHER, WE ARE UNBEATABLE
Get Double PACIFICPOINTS with all V-Power Fuel Purchases.
*See store for details. For more information regarding the new loyalty program, download the PACIFICPOINTS mobile app on your phone or visit www.pacificpoints.com.
Shell V-Power
GO WELL

MCS partners with Hong Ye Hardware

In an effort to raise much needed funds and spread the Christmas spirit, Hong Ye Hardware is offering a special discount for Mount Carmel School's Holiday Coupon Fundraiser. By purchasing a holiday coupon booklet, participants can save 15% off of paint, 20% off of ceiling fans, and 10% off of select bathroom products.

The purpose of the fundraiser is to provide the community with a complete booklet of holiday coupons from local establishments. As the COVID-19 pandemic has affected many families and the CNMI economy, this fundraiser also aims to provide families with discounts for this holiday season while also drawing customers to local businesses.

Funds raised by this program will be directly invested in Mount Carmel School's academic programs and services, COVID-19 mitigation resources, and infrastructural improvements as the school aims to increase more face-to-face classes by its second semester.

Only 200 booklets are available for purchase and can be bought at the MCS Business Office from Monday to Friday between 7am and 4pm.

MCS

A Mount Carmel School student holds holiday coupons and official booklet to promote the school's Holiday Coupon Fundraiser.

The $50 holiday coupon booklet contains a total of 35 coupons with discounts from partners like Bubba Gump, Couples Cakery, Fishing Tackle, Great Harvest, Herman's Modern Bakery, Hong Ye Hardware, IT&E, Kensington Resort, Kiki's, McDonald's Saipan, MiscKnicKnacks, Natural Nail Spa, Pao Pao, Surf Club Restaurant, T Bar, The Shack, Tribe Marianas, and Triple J Motors. Participants of the fundraiser can save over $200 this holiday season through the provided discounts alone.

For more information about Mount Carmel School's Holiday Coupon Fundraiser, visit www.mountcarmelsaipan.com. ***(PR)***

Coast Guard joins search for missing mariners off Kiribati

HONOLULU—U.S. Coast Guard and maritime partners have located all four missing mariners from two search and rescue missions off Kiribati, Tuesday.

The three mariners aboard the 15-foot wooden skiff were located 460-miles southwest of their original departure point by the commercial fishing vessel Jin Hui 18. The remaining mariner from the second search and rescue mission was located 140-miles west of his original departure point by an Air Station Barbers Point HC-130 Hercules aircrew where a nearby good Samaritan was able to successfully rescue the mariner.

"Through the dedicated professionalism and teamwork with our search and rescue partners we were able to save four members of the Pacific maritime community and bring them back home to their families," said Lt. j.g. Sarah Chen.

At 8:57pm, Thursday, JRCC Honolulu watchstanders received agency assist requests from JRCC Fiji for three overdue mariners on a 15-foot wooden skiff off of Kiribati. JRCC Honolulu received a second agency assist request on Saturday for one mariner on a disabled 20-foot wooden skiff approximately 150-miles from the first search location. ***(PR)***

BANK OF SAIPAN
Ease and Convenience You Can Bank on Right at Your Fingertips

For banking on the go, download the EASi Mobile app, enroll, and in a matter of minutes, you can enjoy all the access you need to manage your accounts from home, from work, from the gym or almost anywhere.

Transaction Completed
EASI MOBILE
Receive a $5 Statement Credit when you use EASI Mobile!
Available to the First 100 Customers only.

With EASi Mobile you will be able to do everything in EASi Banking from your cell phone!

- View and download your account history.
- View account balances and check images.
- Transfer funds to existing Bank of Saipan accounts and accounts at other financial institutions.
- Go green and receive eStatements.
- Send and receive secure email to Customer Service regarding your accounts and/or other products or services.
- Pay bills without having to stand in line!

BANKOFSAIPAN.COM GET IT ON Google Play Coming Soon on the App Store

Bank of Saipan deposits are insured by a private payment guaranty, which pays up to $250,000 per account. Bank of Saipan is not federally insured.

Felis Pasgua

SUNSETS OVER BLUE WATERS. THE SAND. THE OCEAN. THE WARM WEATHER. THIS IS OUR TROPICAL CHRISTMAS.

Celebrate this Christmas with local art. **2020 Pacifica Art Contest** Pacifica Reacts: **YouTube.com/pacificainsurance**

Friend.Follow.Subscribe.

www.pacificains.com

pacifica Insurance Underwriters, Inc. Rest Assured.

UOG to hold virtual commencement on Dec. 27

The University of Guam will confer degrees to more than 230 graduates at its Fanuchånan 2020 Commencement Ceremony on Sunday, Dec. 27.

The ceremony will be held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It will be streamed at 3 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 27, on the UOG Facebook page at www.facebook.com/UniversityofGuam.

Former valedictorian to deliver keynote

The virtual ceremony will include a keynote speech by Dr. Edison P. Manaloto, a two-time UOG alumnus and the 2006 UOG valedictorian who this year returned to Guam as a medical doctor at Guam Regional Medical City.

"Edison embodies the UOG motto of excelsior, or 'ever upward,'" said UOG President Thomas W. Krise. "He has continually reached for the next level and the next means of making an impact on his home island of Guam."

With a bachelor's in accounting and master's in public administration from the University of Guam, Manaloto first pursued a career in public and private sector accounting — working for Deloitte & Touche, the Hyatt Regency Guam, and Guam's Office of Finance and Budget and achieving the credentials of Certified Public Accountant and Certified Governmental Financial Manager. Later, seeing the pressing need for medical professionals in Guam, he applied for medical school at De La Salle Health Sciences Institute in the Philippines and became a Doctor of Medicine in 2015 and completed his residency at the University of Hawaii this past June.

Two to earn honorary degrees

The ceremony will also have a special recognition of two honorary degree recipients.

"Receiving an honorary degree shows that these individuals have not only become experts in their fields, but have earned the respect of our community and made long-lasting contributions to society," Krise said.

Rosalia Fejeran Mateo, a master traditional healer — or Yo'åmte — for 64 years and one of the few remaining indigenous experts in her field, will be receiving the honorary degree of Master of Micronesian Traditional Knowledge. Better known as "Mama Chai," she first apprenticed at the age of 19 under Yo'åmte Regina Terlaje and has since, through herbal medicine and massage, healed thousands of clients suffering from skin problems, respiratory issues, pain, infertility, women's health issues, and more.

She was instrumental in opening Guam's first Traditional Healing Center at Sagan Kotturan Chamorro in Tamuning in 2016, where she today sees as many as 19 clients per day. "I love to heal people. I love them," Mateo said.

She has also helped develop an apprenticeship program and has been teaching and guiding two apprentices to learn traditional healing. "They tell me it's hard. […] You have to be strong, be patient," she said.

Rlene S. Steffy will be receiving an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree. Steffy is a mass communications specialist of 42 years with a diverse career as a writer, journalist, talk show host, and documentarian. She has come to be considered one of the leading oral-history practitioners in the region, capturing the experiences of war survivors, community leaders, and traditional knowledge experts throughout Micronesia. She recently documented her expertise and technique in the "How to Conduct Oral History Interviews" guide for the Northern Marianas Humanities Council.

"It's an art to collect a story. You have to learn to listen and you have to not be judgmental, and you have to appreciate the experience and the complexity the individual went through," Steffy said. "[…] There's so much we haven't collected — cultural, linguistic, and archaeological experiences, adaptation — how have we [become who we are]? Who are we? That, I think, is important for the future."

For complete details on the commencement ceremony, visit https://www.uog.edu/commencements/fanuchanan-2020/. ***(PR)***

Play it safe this Holiday Season. And Stay
Brabu
Gualo Rai Branch: (670) 233-2668 (AMOT) | MH II Branch: (670) 322-4898 | Kagman Branch: (670) 488-2668
May the peace and hope of Christ's birth be with you now and in the New Year.
From the management and staff of
HERMAN'S MODERN BAKERY
& Tan Marikita's Cafe
TUN HERMAN PAN RD.,
P.O. BOX 500002, SAIPAN, MP 96950
TEL.: (670) 234-1726 | FAX: (670) 288-1726
Email: sales.saipan@hermansbakery.com

DONATION

UOG

The University of Guam Endowment Foundation and the University of Guam donated personal protective equipment to Catholic Social Service on Oct. 16 to be utilized at the emergency homeless shelter in Maite. The donation included 1,500 disposable masks and 10,000 latex gloves that were donated to the UOG Endowment Foundation by AIDS Care China — a community support group in Guangzhou, China, for people with HIV/AIDS. From left, Artemio Conducto, program manager, Catholic Social Service; Danilo Bilong, senior researcher and coordinator, UOG School of Health; and Diana Calvo, executive director, Catholic Social Service.

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

CUC Customer Center closed today

In observance of the Christmas holiday, the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. Customer Center will be closed starting 1pm today, Dec. 24, and also the whole day on Friday, Dec. 25. ***(PR)***

NMC offices closed Dec. 24 and 25

In line with the memo from the Governor's Office dated Dec. 22, 2020 (relating to Christmas Eve Day), Northern Marianas College is informing the community that its offices will be closed today, Dec. 24, 2020 (Christmas Eve Day) and Friday, Dec. 25, 2020 (Christmas Day). Administrative and student service offices will reopen on Monday, Dec. 28, 2020.

Individuals who need assistance or need more information about the upcoming Spring 2021 semester, can email oar@marianas.edu.

An updated class schedule for the Spring 2021 semester as well as information about available financial aid can be found on www.marianas.edu. ***(PR)***

MAFEA 25th anniversary, Christmas party Saturday

The Marianas Association of Filipino Engineers and Architects will be celebrating its 25th founding anniversary and Christmas Party this Dec. 26 at the Fiesta Resort & Spa's Hibiscus Hall. The event will start at 6pm. This will also serve as a fundraising event for the benefit of Filipinos back home who were severely affected by super typhoons Rolly and Ulysses. ***(PR)***

Man-o-war jellyfish advisory

MANGILAO, Guam—The Department of Agriculture's Division of Aquatic and Wildlife Resources (DAWR) would like to remind people that, due to high surf conditions, Indo-Pacific Man-o-War (blue bubble) are present along the island's east and west coasts. Please be cautious of man-o-wars on the beach or in the water. They can still sting even if they are dead and on the beach. Jellyfish have also been spotted along the coasts. These are different from the man-o-wars and in many cases, less dangerous. If man-o-wars are seen, please notify the Department of Agriculture. Call 735-0289/91/94, or e-mail Rodney.Tibbatts@doag.guam.gov. Indicate if it is jellyfish, or man-o-wars (the blue bubble). ***(PR)***

May the magic of Christmas fills every corner of your heart and home with joy – now and always.
From the staff and management of
McDonald's
McCafé
McDonald's Sweetens Up Breakfast with New Nationwide McCafé® Bakery Lineup
AVAILABLE all day
STORE HOURS: GARAPAN EXPRESS OPEN DAILY FROM 6:00AM TO 12 MIDNIGHT
CHALAN PALE ARNOLD ROAD OPEN DAILY FROM 6:00AM TO 10:00PM
Chalan Pale Arnold Road 235-8577 • Garapan Express 233-8577 • Office Tel: 235-8761 • Fax: 235-8760 • E-mail: admin@jcamcd.com

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
Volume XXX, Issue No. 255

Published daily at 2/F JP Center,
Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, CNMI
Mailing Address: PMB 34, Box 10001, Saipan, MP, 96950

Jayvee L. Vallejera EDITOR
editor@saipantribune.com

Mark Rabago ASSOCIATE EDITOR
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com

MEMBER

The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

US must respond strongly to massive cyberattack

The scale and scope of the recently revealed computer hack of scores of federal government agencies, U.S. corporations and perhaps other targets appears to be unprecedented.

The U.S. response must be commensurate. First, an intensive investigation must determine how many entities were compromised and how much damage has been done. How did the cyberattack go undetected for nearly nine months? What can be done quickly to staunch the digital bleeding? And how can the U.S. effectively respond without triggering a self-defeating escalation?

Under normal times, under a normal president, this nation would lead a domestically bipartisan and internationally allied response to such a breach. But President Donald Trump is not that president.

Indeed, instead of concurring with most every expert — including Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who said the Russians "pretty clearly" were behind the attack — Trump deflected Kremlin complicity, suggesting Saturday that China could be the culprit before once again putting his obsessive grievance over losing the election over the interests of the country.

"The Cyber Hack is far greater in the Fake News Media than in actuality," Trump tweeted. "I have been fully briefed and everything is well under control. Russia, Russia, Russia is the priority chant when anything happens because Lamestream is, for mostly financial reasons, petrified of discussing the possibility that it may be China (it may!). There could also have been a hit on our ridiculous voting machines during the election, which is now obvious that I won big, making it an even more corrupted embarrassment for the USA."

First, the hack is not being overplayed. In fact, it may not be getting enough attention. "The scope of this and the sophistication of this are probably unparalleled," Paul Triolo, who heads the geotechnology practice for the Eurasia Group, told an editorial writer.

And blaming Russia isn't a chant, but the data-driven analysis of intelligence professionals like Trump's former Homeland Security Adviser Thomas P. Bossert, who wrote in a New York Times commentary that "domestic and geopolitical tensions could escalate quite easily if they use their access for malign influence and misinformation — both hallmarks of Russian behavior."

Some other Republicans have reacted responsibly, including Utah Sen. Mitt Romney, who said Sunday on "Meet the Press" that "Russia acted with impunity." Speaking of Trump, Romney added: "We've come to recognize that the president has a blind spot when it comes to Russia."

Romney's congressional colleagues shouldn't have the same blind spot about the Kremlin — or the president. Which is why it's not only damaging to democracy but dangerous to national security for so many GOPers to continue to indulge Trump's election lies.

Congress should instead ensure that Trump doesn't make

See US on Next Page

While welcome relief to many, COVID-19 relief package is still inadequate

By CARL P. LEUBSDORF
The Dallas Morning News

Carl P. Leubsdorf is the former Washington bureau chief of the Dallas Morning News*. Readers may write to him via email at carl.p.leubsdorf@gmail.com.*

It should have been a legislative slam dunk, for Congress to provide the additional help most members believe is necessary for the millions of Americans suffering economically from the COVID-19 pandemic.

But it turned into one of the biggest congressional embarrassments of recent years, taking nearly eight months after House Democrats passed a massive $3.2 trillion aid package for lawmakers of both parties to approve less than one-third that amount.

While welcome relief to many, the final package is still inadequate, ignoring among other things that many states and localities are being forced to lay off teachers, transportation workers and law enforcement personnel because of coronavirus-caused revenue shortages.

In the meantime, unemployment is again growing, consumer spending is falling and more than 8 million Americans have dropped back into poverty. Some lawmakers even sought to make it harder for President-elect Joe Biden, who seems likely to inherit an even worse economic situation than greeted Barack Obama after the 2008 financial collapse.

At almost every step, the drive for political advantage dominated deliberations. The failure of leaders from both parties to compromise is to blame: House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and President Donald Trump.

And lawmakers have abandoned — especially the Senate — the old-fashioned notion of bringing legislation to the floor and letting a majority work its will.

Here in a nutshell is how this happened:

Last March, unanimous bipartisan votes approved some $2 trillion in relief measures. But since then, there has been little unanimity on timing — or amounts.

In May, recognizing the burgeoning pandemic might preclude normal congressional deliberations, Pelosi's House set a political marker by passing a bill including $1 trillion for state and local governments, additional funds for direct payments, extended unemployment assistance and a variety of other items from election assistance to funding the Violence Against Women Act. Senate Republicans, rediscovering deficit concerns many ignored while voting big tax cuts three years ago, made clear they would never approve that much.

Between July and the Nov. 3 election, Pelosi and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin sought to develop a compromise package. In the weeks before the election, they came close: Pelosi offered to settle for $2.2 trillion and Mnuchin proposed $1.8 trillion.

But McConnell resisted, because many Republican senators opposed any additional aid, and it was unclear Trump would accept Mnuchin's proposals. McConnell demanded inclusion of liability protection for businesses in case returning workers contracted the virus, a nonstarter for Democrats who considered it anti-worker.

In the end, Pelosi resisted a deal, despite internal pressure from some fellow Democrats, in part because she feared Trump would take political credit for any preelection relief checks.

Trump, who has been less involved in congressional negotiations than any modern president, never directly engaged in the talks, sometimes undercutting Mnuchin with an erratic course alternating between denouncing the Democrats and demanding an increase in proposed direct payments.

He adamantly opposed aid to states and municipalities struggling under increased costs and decreased revenues, contending it would reward Democratic financial mismanagement, though many revenue-short states are run by Republicans.

Moody's Analytics, an independent financial services firm, estimates that, without new assistance, states and localities face a shortfall of $171 billion to $301 billion over the next year and a half, including both red and blue states.

When talks resumed last month, a bipartisan group of senators proposed a compromise $908 billion package, which became the focus of leadership along with the need to fund the federal government through next September.

The final proposal dropped both additional aid to states and localities and McConnell's liability waiver.

It's the kind of end-of-the session exercise that has become all too typical of congressional budget procedures in the past decade. Last-minute scrambling in a closely divided Senate allows individual lawmakers to delay action with favored proposals; Sens. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., and Josh Hawley, R-Mo., sought to double direct payments; Pat Toomey, R-Pa., backed by fellow Republicans, tried to curb future Federal Reserve efforts to spur the economy.

Democrats thought McConnell was mainly fixated on next month's two Georgia runoffs elections that will be determine Senate control and that Republicans were trying to tie Biden's hands to deal with the country's economic woes. Republicans thought Pelosi sought to include too many programs beyond helping those hit by the pandemic. Trump briefly weighed in by urging the benefits be increased, before retreating.

Among underlying factors has been that, during Trump's term in the White house, McConnell has resisted any Senate action that was unacceptable to the president, rather than challenge him. But with Democrats holding one House and a strong Sen-

See WHILE on Next Page

As the light returns, it's time to make a list of what we've missed, and appreciated, in this dark year

By MARY SCHMICH
Chicago Tribune

Mary Schmich is a columnist for the Chicago Tribune *and winner of the 2012 Pulitzer Prize for commentary.*

And now the light comes back.

On Monday the winter solstice arrived, marking the moment we begin the slow climb out of the darkness, like weary miners exiting the pit. This year more than ever the shift feels psychological as well as astronomical, so it's a good time to take account of the things we've missed during this dark time, along with what has provided some light in spite of it all.

In that spirit, I've made two lists. I encourage you to make your own.

THINGS I'VE MISSED

1. The ability to plan

Before the pandemic, most of us made plans. For trips. Get-togethers. The future. Wise people have always known the precarious nature of the best-laid plans, etc., and people without money tend to know it. But until March many of us enjoyed the fiction that we could control the time ahead. Now we live in the wobblier world of the day-by-day, which is disorienting but closer to reality.

2. Chitchat

Remember the idle but vital conversation you used to have with people at the coffeehouse or at work or church? Until you're deprived of chitchat, you don't notice how much those seemingly small connections and conversations educate and sustain you.

3. Coffeehouses

Nothing like a chilly December day to make you yearn for that cozy place outside the house where you can think, read or chitchat.

4. Airplanes

In a movie scene the other night, I saw a man on an airplane and felt an unexpected jolt of nostalgia. Was I really nostalgic for the feel of pulling down the tray table? I was.

5. Travel

I miss the visits to friends and family. The possibility of exploring new and distant places. The change of view. The sense of movement.

6. Casual touch

Remember the hello hug, the goodbye hug, the it'll-be-OK hug? The friendly hand on an elbow? The firm handshake? How long before those seem OK again?

7. Live music and theater

One day this summer I stopped to listen to a band playing in a neighborhood park. I saw a couple of bystanders with tears in their eyes and felt the same way. Virtual performances are better than nothing, but they simply can't match the energy of live ones.

8. Wearing dresses

I love a good, simple dress. But what's the point in a pandemic?

9. People I love

We talk, we email, we have dinner across the Zoom screen. That's better than nothing — "better than nothing" is a mantra for our times — but it's not the same. And yet, the separation has made me realize how much I love and depend on friends and family. Missing them makes me appreciate them more. Which leads to the second list.

THINGS I'VE APPRECIATED MORE

1. Health care workers. Grocery clerks. Delivery people. Postal carriers. Poll workers. Journalists who go out into the world seeking sense in the chaos. Those are just some of the people the pandemic has taught us to call "essential." They were essential before, but rarely recognized that way.

Also, newspaper carriers. It's a good season to tip yours, by the way.

2. Small businesses, and the people who work in them

Local shops and restaurants give life and flavor to our neighborhoods. As they struggle to stay alive in the pandemic, we realize their value more acutely.

3. Birds, bugs and trees

Nothing like being stuck at home to make you notice what lives around you.

4. Reliable Wi-Fi

As we've become more dependent on Wi-Fi, we've also learned how many people are deprived of it. Access to Wi-Fi is just one of the inequities the pandemic has exposed.

5. White vinegar

Staying home has turned many people into maniacal cleaners. I grew up washing windows with vinegar and newspapers, so the miraculous properties of white vinegar aren't a revelation. But the pandemic has expanded my repertoire. Cut the vinegar with dish soap and water to clean kitchen counters. Mix it with water to wash berries and keep them from spoiling. The opportunities are endless.

6. My neighbors

The pandemic has forced us outside — to eat, to exercise, to socialize — and, like many people, I've gotten to know my neighbors better as a result.

7. Good walking shoes

I recently wrote about the psychological benefits of walking through the pandemic. Many people replied with a question: What shoes do you wear? I hesitate to recommend shoes because feet are idiosyncratic. But for the past couple of years I've sworn by the On Cloud (aka On or OC) basic "Cloud" shoe, made for running and walking. (I saw a photo of Jill Biden in a pair the other day.)

8. Good novels about plagues

It's weirdly consoling to read about other plagues in distant times. Those stories put this plague into perspective. A few favorites: "Year of Wonders" by Geraldine Brooks. "Station Eleven" by Emily St. John Mandel. "The End of October" by Lawrence Wright. "Hamnet" by Maggie O'Farrell. "The Plague" by Albert Camus.

9. Being alive long enough to watch the light return.

WHILE

From Page 12

ate minority, any agreement needed their acquiescence.

The final measure is mainly designed to tide people over until early next year, when anti-virus vaccinations promise some medical relief and the political dynamics will change with Democrats running the White House as well as the House. Biden has already promised to push for more aid.

The degree that will be possible may depend on whether Republicans keep Senate control Jan. 5. In any case, both houses will be so evenly divided that any significant action will still require the kinds of compromises that have been so difficult to achieve this year.

US

From Page 12

President-elect Joe Biden's task even harder. To that end, Congress should be quite clear that it will override Trump's peevish veto threat of the new National Defense Authorization Act, which has several provisions to strengthen cyber defense, over unrelated legal protections for social media sites.

"You would hope that the U.S. government response would be more uniform," Triolo said. "In this particular time, it's a very troubling response from the top." Especially since the hack is not only political but, as Triolo describes it, "a very serious attack on the fabric of the internet more globally."

Accordingly, a more global response is needed. That means more unity at home and cohesion abroad. Trump is not the leader who will accomplish, let alone attempt, this. But Biden should not be hindered by an outgoing president and complicit congressional members putting party over country.

©2020 StarTribune

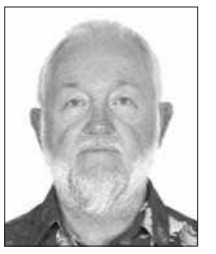
Yule log for 12 Days of Christmas

(Twelve limerick lauds and laments)

LITERARY NOOK

By JOEY 'PEPE BATBON' CONNOLLY
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Joey "Pepe Batbon" Connolly is a retired teacher and has been named a poet laureate of Tinian. He has taught English in CNMI public schools for the past 30 years. He has also taught in Alaska, New Orleans, and Las Vegas.



The village sighs in relief the typhoon is gone
and here comes the sun on a Xmas dawn
Santa's annual global trip has been delayed
mail and presents will be late we are afraid
but look! lots of fallen fruit out on the lawn.

One Xmas morning it was quiet as a mouse
as we brought baby Jesus from house to house
singing Christmas carols we ate bunelos dagu
though twenty years ago I can still smell pagu
yan bulala titityas made by Mrs. Santa Claus.

We walked to the guma yu'us mass at midnight
church decorations with palm fronds a delight
down the chalan kaskao we heard happy noise
maila fan baila dandan with Marpo Valley Boys
Baby Jesus in the manger was a wonderful sight

A happy voice on our old truck radio
says listen for the sleigh bells in the snow
but I think the first thing that I heard
was pounding hoofs of Santa's reindeer herd
as a Christmas crescendo began to grow.

Of course there were all those silver bells
and all those delicious Xmas cookie smells
what I remember about the absolute most
was the smell of a nearby island pig roast
crispy skin and cheek fat in my brain dwells.

All around the Xmas tree kitty chased a mouse
knocked the tree over and woke the whole house
we put it back up adding a fresh popcorn string
sang songs that Tun Henry boy taught us to sing
and ate hard tack biscutsu baked by Santa's spouse.

Seems like almost every year we got a Xmas rat
that had a long tail and always looked quite fat
climbing around sniffing goodies mother cooks
sticking a whiskered nose into crannies and nooks
and underneath the chair where Santa always sat.

In upstate NY us brothers planted trees out back
pulling young saplings out of the woods in a sack
they were mostly blue spruce or red and white pine
twelve years later they made Xmas trees quite fine
we cut one then went in for a hot chocolate snack.

Aunt Mary made garlands from small thread spools
we tied them with ribbon and glued on glitter jewels
then around the tree it went with strings of popcorn
in anticipation of some presents on Christmas morn
smells from the kitchen brought out babies drools.

A bearded man from the North Pole Santa Claus
reindeer pulled his sleigh with magic flying paws
bringing presents all around the world he would go
through typhoons tropical storms and ice and snow
while laughing with lots of ho ho hos and gee haws.

A simple red and white peppermint candy cane
sweet memories of it are stuck inside my brain
around and around went those delicious stripes
on my tongue mouth chewing down my pipes
on my sticky fingers it left gooey red stains.

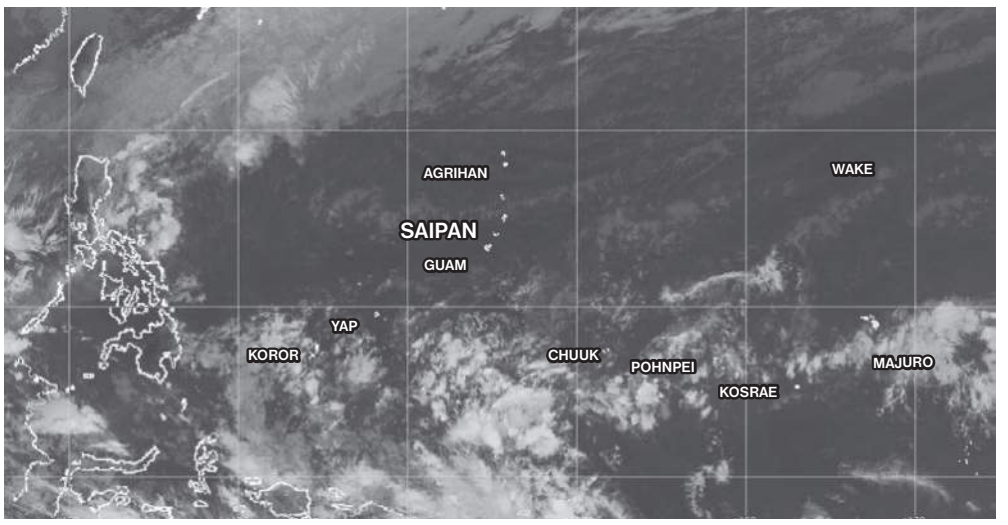
I found a present underneath the Xmas tree
that at the time meant the whole world to me
usually it was much needed warm clothes
of which those I could not turn up my nose
love from Mom that all of us kids could see.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
Breezy. Mostly sunny with isolated showers. East winds 20 to 25 mph.	Mostly cloudy with scattered showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
86º 77º	86º 77º	86º 77º	87º 77º	87º 77º

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 8:31 AM, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2020

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Reports from Ritidian Point show surf has increased along north facing reefs. Ritidian buoy show a swell of 5 feet with a period of 12 seconds. This should yield a surf height of 7 feet. Ritidian also showed maximum sea heights up to 20 feet a few hours ago. Sea heights have decreased to 15 feet. The swell and large sea heights could have combined to produce some hazardous surf. Surf should decrease below hazardous levels on north and east facing reefs by tonight. The risk of high rip currents will persist on east facing reefs through Friday.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA	▲ ▼ °F	
Guam and Rota	Thunderstorms	86° / 79°
Palau	Thunderstorms	84° / 77°
Yap	Thunderstorms	86° / 79°
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	85° / 80°
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	86° / 79°
Kosrae	Thunderstorms	86° / 79°
Majuro	Partly Cloudy	85° / 81°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:39 AM	5:53 PM
Friday	6:40 AM	5:54 PM
Saturday	6:40 AM	5:54 PM
Sunday	6:41 AM	5:55 PM
Monday	6:41 AM	5:55 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	1:32 AM	1:42 PM
Friday	-	2:18 AM	2:17 PM
Saturday	-	3:06 AM	2:55 PM
Sunday	-	3:55 AM	3:36 PM
Monday	-	4:46 AM	4:20 PM

AROUND THE GLOBE	▲ ▼ °F	
Auckland	Showers	73° / 63°
Beijing	Partly Cloudy	39° / 21°
Hong Kong	Cloudy	66° / 63°
Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	78° / 68°
London	Cloudy	50° / 45°
Los Angeles	Mostly Sunny	70° / 50
Manila	Partly Cloudy	86° / 77°
Melbourne	Sunny	84° / 64°
Miami	Partly Cloudy	78° / 69°
New York	Windy	41° / 28°
Osaka	Mostly Sunny	48° / 39°
Paris	Mostly Cloudy	46° / 43°
Busan	Partly Cloudy	46° / 28°
Rome	Mostly Sunny	57° / 46°
Salem	Mostly Sunny	50° / 32°
San Francisco	Showers	56° / 45°
Seoul	Partly Cloudy	39° / 16°
Tokyo	Partly Cloudy	48° / 36°
Washington, DC	Mostly Sunny	39° / 28°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
3:52 AM	LOW TIDE	1.06
9:04 AM	HIGH TIDE	0.62
3:36 PM	LOW TIDE	1.58
10:52 PM	HIGH TIDE	0.26

STOP THE SPREAD

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. continue to encourage residents within the Marianas to practice social distancing, which means avoiding close contact with people in order to avoid catching the virus yourself and to avoid passing it on to others.

- Stay home as much as possible. Avoid unnecessary travel or public places.
- Avoid social gatherings in groups of more than 10.
- Choose drive-thru, take-out, or delivery options, or outdoor seating, if available, when dining in.
- Send only one healthy adult from the household run necessary errands, such as getting groceries or picking up medications. Leave children, elderly, and other vulnerable people at home as much as possible. When returning home from an errand, wash your hands before doing anything else.
- Older adults and people with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. People at high risk should stay at home as much as possible.
- Create a household plan of action, https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/checklisthousehold-ready.html
- Ensure a 30-day supply of all medicines.

Continue good hand hygiene

- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, avoid touching your face, cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.

Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if you become symptomatic

- Stay home when you are sick and if you recently traveled to a place with COVID-19. Self-quarantine means:
- ❑ Choosing a room in your house that can be used to separate sick household members from others.
- ❑ Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- ❑ Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- ❑ Limiting visitors

CHCC appreciates the patience and understanding of the community at this time. To obtain general information about the CNMI COVID-19 response, contact the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force Hotline at 287-0046, 287-0489, 287-1089. These numbers are available Monday to Sunday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For medical information about COVID-19, reach out to the COVID-19 Infoline at the following numbers: 285-1672/1352. These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For mental health support and helpful tips during a crisis, call the Mental Health Support Line at 285-1856, 323-6560, 323-6561 These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30 pm. For the 24/7 Disaster Distress Helpline, call SAMSHA at 1-800-985-5990.

For more information about DIY face coverings, visit https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html

For more information about CHCC programs, follow CHCC on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter at @cnmichcc, check out our website at www.chcc.gov.mp or call us at (670) 234-8950.

For more information on the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, visit www.governor.gov.mpand, follow @GovernorCNMI on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

This health advisory may be found online at http://www.chcc.gov.mp/pressrelease.html and at www.governor.gov.mp/covid-19.

Rumor control

During crises like this, oftentimes the spread of misinformation is just as dangerous as the virus itself. The CNMI is reminded to only share official and verified notices, press releases, and advisories from the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and CHCC.

Source: Office of the Governor

NEWS DESK For news tips, corrections and requests for news coverage, call (670) 235-NEWS (6397), 235-2440, fax 235,3740. E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com. Website:www.saipantribune.com.

CUSTOMER SERVICE For inquiries, purchase of back issues and complaints, call (670) 235-8747, 235-2440, fax 235-3740.

SUBSCRIPTION Published Monday to Friday, *Saipan Tribune* offers door-to-door on-island delivery at an annual rate of $180. For additional subscription information, call (670) 235-8747 or 235-2769, or fax 235-3740.

ADVERTISING For inquiries contact (670) 235-2769.
E-mail: sales@saipantribune.com

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF NOVEMBER 1, 2020

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA117	6:55am	7:35am	1, 4, 6

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

UA117/183	6:55am	9:50pm	1 via Guam

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

UA183	8:00pm	9:50pm	1, 3, 5

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	5:10am	5:51am	1, 4, 6

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA184/174	10:40pm	5:51am+1	3, 5 via Guam

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA184	10:40pm	4:30am+1	1, 3, 5

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF OCTOBER 8, 2020

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30AM	9:00AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
1302	11:00AM	11:30AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
1303	3:30PM	4:00PM	Mon/Wed/Fri

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3101	9:30AM	10:00AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
3102	12:00AM	12:30AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
3103	4:30PM	5:00PM	Mon/Wed/Fri

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3401	12:15	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
4301	13:00	13:30	Temporarily Unavailable

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1201	7:00	7:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	10:00	10:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1205	11:00	11:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1206	12:00	12:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1207	13:00	13:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1208	14:00	14:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1209	15:00	15:15	Daily
1210	16:00	16:15	Daily
1211	17:00	17:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1212	18:00	18:15	Temporarily Unavailable

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
2101	7:30	7:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	10:30	10:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2105	11:30	11:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2106	12:30	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2107	13:30	13:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2108	14:30	14:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
2111	17:30	17:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2112	18:30	18:45	Temporarily Unavailable

CCA extends sincere appreciation to partners

With every donation made, the Commonwealth Cancer Association is helping families, friends and community members who have been touched by cancer. Please continue to join the fight by supporting CCA and ensuring its financial viability to sustain its ongoing support services and programs for cancer patients and survivors.

The CCA board of directors extends its profound gratitude to our proud and faithful partners for their cash donations: CNMI government appropriations under PL 21-08 and PL 21-35, DFS Saipan Limited, Triple J Saipan Inc., Joeten Daidai Foundation, Tan Siu Lin Foundation, Bank of Guam, Bridge Capital LLC, TakeCare Insurance, Melvin Manahane and family, Hofschneider Engineering Corp., Seventh-Day Adventist, Pacific Health Inc., J.E.T. Holding Company, First Hawaiian Bank, Micronesian Brokers Inc., MARPAC Inc., National Office Supply and in-kind donations from Joeten Daidai Foundation, Marianas Medical Supply, HealthCare Specialties, Rosel/Zest valued, CNMI Homeland Security & Emergency, and CWM Trust Real Estate. The CCA board also recognizes and extends a heartfelt appreciation to everyone for their commitment and patronage.

In 2003, the CCA began as an alliance of volunteers, becoming formally chartered and incorporated in 2008. In 2009 the CCA achieved a tax-exempt status under 501 (c) (3), and since then has provided direct financial assistance, nutritional supplements and other personal needs, as well as certain types of medical equipment such as hospital beds, wheelchairs, and oxygen concentrators prescribed by a locally licensed physicians to qualifying clients in the CNMI who are receiving treatment for cancer.

The CCA also facilitates monthly cancer survivors and caregiver support group meetings, engages in a variety of awareness and outreach activities, and has produced various educational publications such as brochures, fliers, videos and DVD's for our diverse community. Awareness activities and events related to cervical cancer, oral cancer, colorectal cancer, breast cancer, prostate cancer, and lung and pancreatic cancer awareness, are just a few of the annual educational and outreach activities carried out by the CCA. The CCA also engages in programs such as early screening and detection, and patient navigation. The CCA has formed critical partnerships with all seven of the CNMI's dental clinics, in order to provide free oral cancer screening for all ages.

The CCA extends thanks to all of its partners, donors and individuals who contribute to the successful programs of the association. The public is encouraged to learn about our programs and contribute to the very important and worthwhile work of the CCA. For more information, you can contact the CCA at 682-0050, email ccamarianas@gmail.com, or visit our website at www.ccamarianas.org or you can visit the CCA office at the Gualo Rai Plaza Building, located along Chalan Pale Arnold/Middle Road in Gualo Rai. ***(PR)***

Passenger loading bridges installation crew arrive

Last week, three members of the five-member installation crew for the Francisco C. Ada-Saipan International Airport passenger loading bridges arrived in the CNMI. One member arrived on Dec. 14 and was released from quarantine this past Saturday. The other two members may be released from quarantine this week, if they also test negative for COVID-19. The fourth member is expected to arrive shortly, and the fifth member is expected to arrive in January 2021. The fourth and fifth members are also subject to the CNMI's quarantine requirements.

The members of the installation team currently on-island will begin inventory of the bridge components this week. Next week, the team will begin installing the rotundas and small walkways for Gates 2, 3, and 6. Once those items are complete, the team will begin installation of Gate 6, which is the primary bridge used by United Airlines.

This project was originally slated for completion in November 2020. However, due to the previous subcontractor's insurance issues and issues with the CNMI's quarantine requirements, this project was not completed by that deadline. Through coordination between CPA, the contractor, and the construction manager, a different installation subcontractor was engaged to complete the project.

The project is now slated for completion in spring 2021. ***(PR)***

Midea® ELECTRIC Christmas SALE

MIDEA AIRCONDITIONING
AUX BRAND AIRCONDITIONING
FREEZER
REFRIGERATOR
WASHER
WATER DISPENSER
LED ITEMS, SMART TV 32" – 65"
FAUCETS
HARDWARE
HOME APPLIANCES, RICE COOKER, ELECTRIC FAN..
RECHARGEABLE SPEAKERS ETC.

5%-50% OFF

All rechargeable speakers have Bluetooth. Lowest price is down to $13.99

AUX BRAND
9,000 BTU - SALE PRICE: $479

AUX BRAND
18,000 BTU - $730

MIDEA BRAND
24K 17 SEERS - $1,199

MIDEA BRAND
36K 16-18 SEERS - $1,999

RECHARGEABLE SPEAKER W/ MICROPHONE
(MINI SIZE – PARTY SIZE)

New Arrival on Hot Sale

Located at CK across the U.S. Post Office

HAO'S AIR CONDITIONING
Phone: 234-0680 / 285-0680 Fax: 234-0688
For more info, check us at the store.
INSTALLMENT AVAILABLE

May your holidays be Merry & Bright!

May the magic and wonder of the holidays continue to fill your hearts with gifts of happiness and prosperity.

From our family at First Hawaiian Bank to yours, we wish you a happy holiday!

First Hawaiian Bank.
IT ALL STARTS WITH YES

Gualo Rai Branch, Gualo Rai Commercial Center, Middle Road • Tel: (670) 235-3090
Oleai Branch, Oleai Center, Beach Road Chalan Laulau • Tel: (670) 234-6559

Member FDIC EQUAL HOUSING LENDER

Ancient DNA sheds light on the peopling of the Marianas

To reach the Mariana Islands in the Western Pacific, humans crossed more than 2,000 kilometers of open ocean, and around 2,000 years earlier than any other sea travel over an equally long distance. They settled in the Marianas around 3,500 years ago, slightly earlier than the initial settlement of Polynesia.

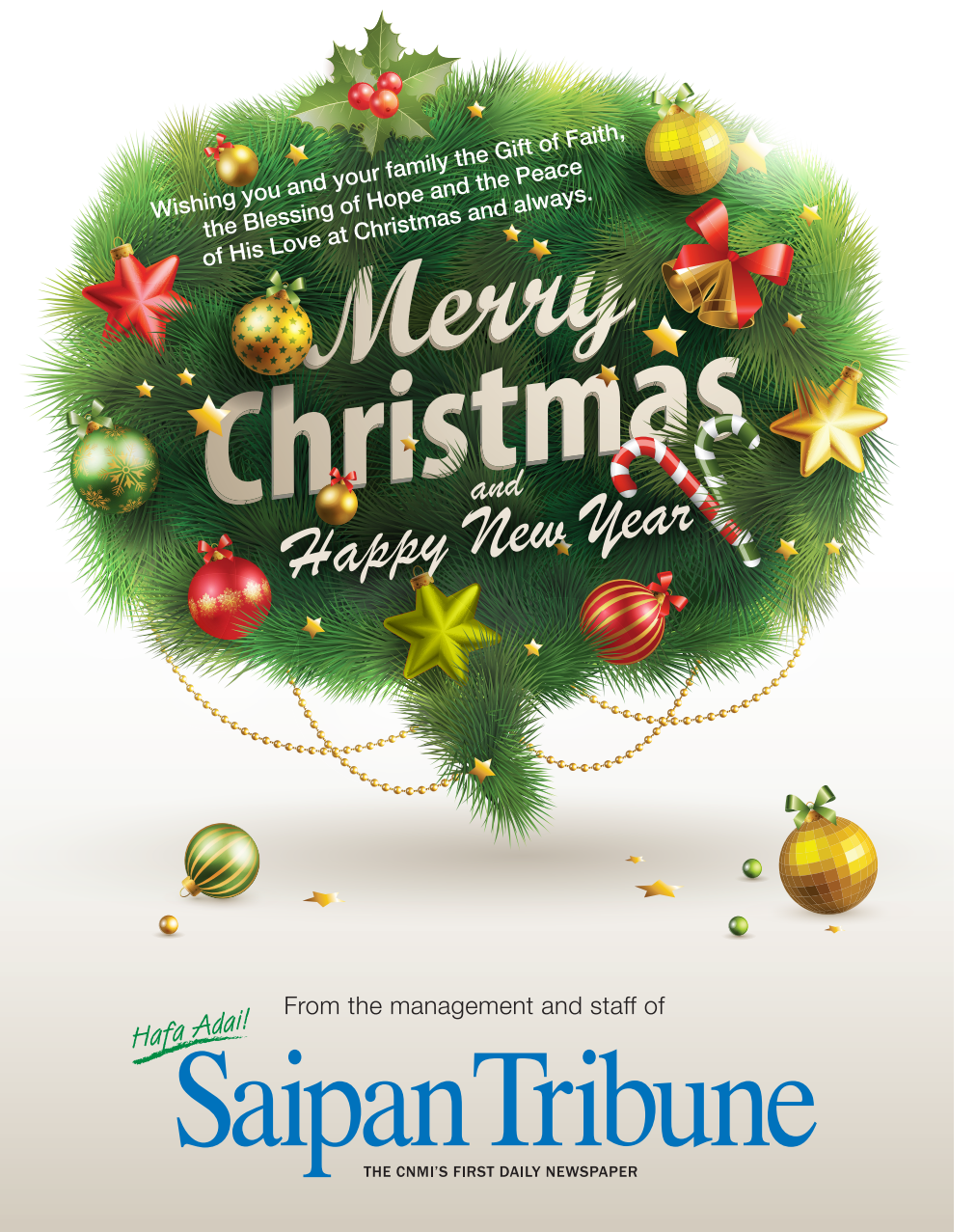
"We know more about the settlement of Polynesia than we do about the settlement of the Mariana Islands," says first author Irina Pugach, a researcher at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany. The researchers wanted to find out where people came from to get to the Marianas and how the ancestors of the present Mariana Islanders, the Chamorro, might be related to Polynesians.

To address these questions the researchers obtained ancient DNA data from two skeletons from the Ritidian Beach Cave site in northern Guam, dating to around 2,200 years ago. "We found that the ancestry of these ancient skeletons is linked to the Philippines," says Pugach. "These findings strengthen the picture that has emerged from linguistic and archaeological studies, pointing to an Island Southeast Asia origin for the first settlers of the Marianas," says co-author Mike T. Carson, an archaeologist at the Micronesian Area Research Center at the University of Guam.

"We also find a close link between the ancient Guam skeletons and early Lapita individuals from Vanuatu and Tonga in the Western Pacific region," adds Pugach. "This suggests that the Marianas and Polynesia may have been colonized from the same source population, and raises the possibility that the Marianas played a role in the eventual settlement of Polynesia."

The researchers point out that while the new results provide interesting new insights, they are based on only two skeletons that date from around 1,400 years after the first human settlement in Guam. "The peopling of Guam and the settlement of such remote archipelagos in Oceania needs further investigation," says senior author Mark Stoneking of the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology. ***(Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology)***

May your home be filled with joy
and love this Christmas season.
Merry Christmas and
Happy New Year!
From the management and staff of
CIC
Century Insurance Co., Ltd.
A TanHoldings Company
PMB 193 Box 10000 Saipan MP 96950 • Tel. No. 1-670-234-0609/10


Wishing you and your family the Gift of Faith,
the Blessing of Hope and the Peace
of His Love at Christmas and always.
Merry Christmas
and
Happy New Year
Hafa Adai!
From the management and staff of
Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Business

AQUASMITH:
Tradition meets modern

By BEA CABRERA
beacabrerasaipan@gmail.com
CORRESPONDENT

Get 20% off on all items until today at Aquasmith, which is the No. 1 place when it comes to up-to-date gear for spearfishing, a sport that is loved by many locals on island. Aquasmith was established in 1999 by general manager Morito Asai, a spearfishing enthusiast himself, who saw the need to let the tradition of spearfishing flourish by bringing in modern gear and equipment.

"I am originally from Japan and I feel fortunate that I have learned under the hands of experienced fishermen—Mr. Ed Aguon and Mr.Felix Sasamoto Jr.—and I fell in love with the sport. Later on, I realized perhaps I can support local fishermen by carrying this great traditional sport by bringing modern gear to catch up with the world," he said.

"Back then, we needed to fly to Guam to get long fins and factory-made spear guns. But now, people don't have to because it is conveniently right here at Aquasmith when they need it. This greatly helps with self-sufficiency when it comes to food which is important for the island," he added.

Aquasmith provides world-class spearfishing gear from all over the world that includes Italy, Spain, France, Greece, South-Africa, and the U.S. "As much as possible we like to support local fishermen and that is one reason why we accept regular food stamp, because we know it's hard time for everyone so you can buy spearfishing gear to catch fish to eat. We are planning to start home or office delivery service beginning of 2021 to make shopping more convenient and we're looking at starting skin-diving lessons again soon,"Asai said.

"We carry Cressi, OMER, Rob Allen, Salvimar, Spetton, Beuchat, Picasso, Hammerhead, C4, Pathos, Meandros, and Riffe. Spearfishers from abroad are surprised when they visit our store and see the wide selection and the latest models such as roller spear guns with reasonable prices for the such tiny islands in the middle of pacific," Asai added.

He believes that spearfishing as a sport and a source of livelihood is here to stay. "I believe that it is in the local's DNA… spearfishing is still a source of livelihood for Chamorro and Carolinian people, a deep part of their culture and tradition and is passed down from generation to generation. They say it is difficult to inherit traditional culture all over the world but fortunately spearfishing is now popular with the young people," Asai said.

"I hope we will pass it on to future local generations. Saipan has dive spots in the north, south, east, and west. When the east side is rough, the west side is calm. The water is warm and mostly clear all throughout the year. For beginners, I suggest Pau Pau Beach to start with. The area is surrounded by the reef so it's protected and way more safe compared to other spots. I started to teach my son with Hawaiian sling there when he was 5 or 6 and I see some kids starting around that age too," Asai added.

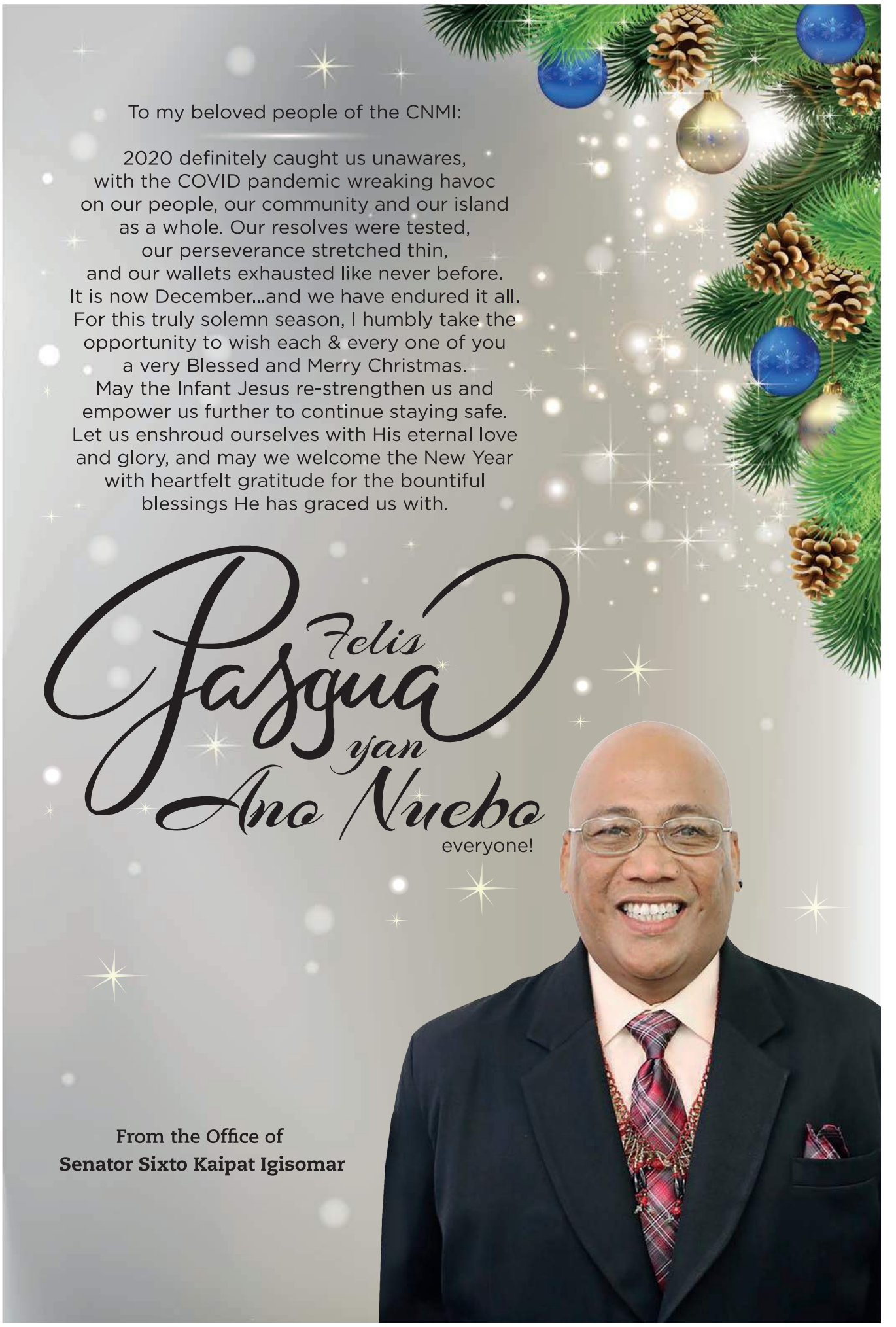
Spearfishing is a tradition of strength and skill but at the end of the day, it is the community that benefits. "Most spearfishers share with their family or friends and don't catch more than we need and it's not that easy anyway. Actually, the better you get, you become more picky on the species and size of the target fish," Asai said.

"Some fishermen sell to fish markets if they have some extra catch, it's important because spearfishing is not for everybody but most people love to eat fresh local fish," Asai added.

Aquasmith is located at the 2nd floor of Western Union near Sarah Fashion and Maganda Utang along Garapan Street in Garapan. They are open Monday -Friday from 10am to 5pm. For more information, call (670) 233-5055 or go to their website :https://aquasmith.com FaceBook :https://www.facebook.com/aquasmith670/?ref=page_internal and Instagam:https://www.instagram.com/aquasmith_1/.

From left, Eunice Kikku, Morito Asai, and Yoshi Iizuka of Aquasmith are ready to serve you at their shop in Garapan.
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
An Aquasmith customer and spearfishing enthusiast with his daughter.


To my beloved people of the CNMI:
2020 definitely caught us unawares,
with the COVID pandemic wreaking havoc
on our people, our community and our island
as a whole. Our resolves were tested,
our perseverance stretched thin,
and our wallets exhausted like never before.
It is now December...and we have endured it all.
For this truly solemn season, I humbly take the
opportunity to wish each & every one of you
a very Blessed and Merry Christmas.
May the Infant Jesus re-strengthen us and
empower us further to continue staying safe.
Let us enshroud ourselves with His eternal love
and glory, and may we welcome the New Year
with heartfelt gratitude for the bountiful
blessings He has graced us with.
Felis Pasgua yan Ano Nuebo
everyone!
From the Office of
Senator Sixto Kaipat Igisomar

Marg's Bakery & Kitchen: One-stop shop for sweet, savory

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

It's never too late buy Christmas cookies and fruit cake for the holidays and one place those are readily available is Marg's Bakery & Kitchen in Susupe.

Owner Jeffrey Castelo said Marg's Bakery & Kitchen is your go-to place for your Christmas-themed pastries. "Right now we are not doing any package promotions, but we do have Christmas cookies, fruit cakes, pies, and of course cakes available for everyone to buy and enjoy for the holiday season," he said.

Named after original owner Margaret Tudela, Marg's Bakery & Kitchen first opened in 1987 and has become a veritable "one-stop shop for people who crave for sweet and savory treats or just those who want to quench their thirst with different varieties of pastries, lunch bentos, and drinks…we're widely known for our pastries, different flavored cakes, and our fresh ice-cold lemonade," he said.

MARK RABAGO
Marg's Bakery & Kitchen is open from Monday to Friday, 7am-4:30pm, and Saturdays, 7am-4pm, and is located across Mt. Carmel Church in Susupe.

Like other businesses on-island, Marg's Bakery & Kitchen was affected in many ways by the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, they had to limit store hours and at some point even closed for a period of time because of the earlier community cases the CNMI had.

"The safety of our customers as well as our own workers is our priority. More so, even after establishments were allowed to operate, the concerns of the community could not be eliminated, but as days passed by people gained confidence to go out and in return costumers started to come in, it's not as well as how it was before the pandemic but we're thankful," said Castelo.

As far as following the guidelines set by the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, Marg's Bakery & Kitchen is in lock-step. "We followed standard protocols when it comes to social distancing, allowing maximum of 5-6 costumers at a time inside the store, and wearing of mask for both costumers entering the store as well as our staff. We also do proper hand-sanitizing and have hand sanitizers available for people to use."

Castelo added he hopes Marg's Bakery & Kitchen will continue to serve the community as best as it can moving forward, especially after COVID-19. "We are planning to maintain the quality of our products for our consumers to enjoy, and hopefully improve the ones that needs improvements, as well as the facility itself to maintain cleanliness."

He also thanked all loyal patrons of Marg's Bakery & Kitchen the past 33 years. "We would like to thank everyone who have supported us through the years especially even during the hard times, for choosing us to serve you and meet your cravings. We promise to do our best to serve you better and we hope and pray that everyone will be safe as the year ends, Although it wasn't the best year for everyone, but together we can push through and we can only look forward to what is next."

Marg's Bakery & Kitchen is open from Monday to Friday, 7am-4:30pm, and Saturdays, 7am-4pm, and is located across Mt. Carmel Church in Susupe. For more information or for advance orders, call 234-1229.

MARK RABAGO
Marg's Bakery & Kitchen first opened in 1987 and has become a veritable one-stop shop for people who crave for sweet and savory treats.

Nation

Trump assails COVID relief bill, suggests he may not sign

WASHINGTON (AP)— President Donald Trump is assailing the bipartisan $900 billion pandemic relief package that Congress just passed and is suggesting that he may not sign it.

Trump complained in a video that he tweeted out Tuesday night that the bill delivered too much money to foreign countries, but not enough to Americans.

The bill provides for a $600 payment to most Americans, but Trump said he is asking Congress to amend the bill and "increase the ridiculously low $600 to $2,000, or $4,000 for a couple. I am also asking Congress to get rid of the wasteful and unnecessary items from this legislation and to send me a suitable bill."

The relief package was part of a hard-fought compromise bill that includes $1.4 trillion to fund government agencies through September and contains other end-of-session priorities such as money for cash-starved transit systems, an increase in food stamp benefits and about $4 billion to help other nations provide a COVID-19 vaccine for their people.

The relief package was brought forward Monday afternoon and sped through the House and Senate in a matter of hours as lawmakers worked to close the books on the year. While many lawmakers complained about being given so little time to read the bill, they overwhelmingly voted for it as local businesses and constituents seek economic relief from the pandemic

The Senate cleared the package by a 92-6 vote after the House approved it by another lopsided vote, 359-53. Those votes totals would be enough to override a veto should Trump decide to take that step.

After months of partisanship and politicking about a relief package, the logjam broke after President-elect Joe Biden urged his party to accept a compromise with top Republicans that is smaller than many Democrats would have liked.

Biden: Reversing Trump border policies will take many months

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP) — President-elect Joe Biden says it will take months to roll back some of President Donald Trump's actions on immigration, tempering expectations he generated during his campaign and one that may rile advocates pushing for speedy action on the issue.

His Tuesday comments echo those made by two of his top foreign policy advisers in an interview with Spanish wire service EFE on Monday hitting the brakes on rolling back Trump's restrictive asylum policies. Susan Rice, Biden's incoming domestic policy adviser, and Jake Sullivan, his pick for national security adviser, as well as Biden himself, warned that moving too quickly could create a new crisis at the border.

Speaking to reporters in Wilmington, Delaware Wednesday, Biden said he's already started discussing the issues with the Mexican president and "our friends in Latin America" and that "the timeline is to do it so that we in fact make it better not worse."

"The last thing we need is to say we're going to stop immediately, the access to asylum, the way it's being run now, and then end up with 2 million people on our border," Biden said.

He noted that more funding is needed for more asylum judges to process claims, and promised that while he will work to loosen Trump's asylum restrictions, "it's going to take probably the next six months to put that in place."

His comments come as interceptions along the border have increased in recent months. U.S. authorities encountered migrants at the border with Mexico more than 70,000 times in October and in November, four times April's tally. Some experts predict the surge could increase in the early months of Biden's presidency, as a response to the damage wrought by the two hurricanes that have pummeled Central America and the economic fallout from the pandemic, as well as expectations of a more humane approach to immigration from the Biden Administration.

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY
Main Office: FRANCISCO C. ADA/SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
P.O. BOX 501055, SAIPAN MP 96950-1055
Phone: (670) 237-6500/1 • Fax (670) 234-5962
E-mail Address: cpa.admin@pticom.com • Website: www.cnmiports.com

ARFF TRAINING FACILITY TYPHOON DAMAGES
GENERAL REPAIRS/REPLACEMENT
Project No. CPA-SA-001-19

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

The Commonwealth Ports Authority (CPA) is soliciting proposals for general repairs and/or replacement of typhoon damages sustained by Super Typhoon Yutu at the ARFF Training Facility (ARFFTF) at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport as per this Scope of Work (SOW) and associated Contract Documents, meeting all current federal, state and local government agencies' rules and regulations.

The Scope of Work (SOW) outlining the project's general requirements may be picked up at the CPA Administration Office at no cost. Project approach and costs must be within the parameters of the established SOW. Any deviation from the SOW, a proposal based on reduced SOW or a proposal that exceeded what is required by the SOW, may be grounds for immediate disqualification of the offeror's proposal package.

A pre-proposal conference will be held on Friday, January 15, 2021 at 10:00 am at the ARFF Training Facility at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport to discuss the project scope of work in detail. Attendance to the pre-proposal conference is mandatory. A site inspection will immediately follow the pre-proposal conference. Additional site visits after the pre-proposal conference may be coordinated with CPA's Project Manager, Mr. Andrew Ellison, at telephone number 671-689-1262 or 670-288-0907 or Ms. Wendi Prater, CPA Executive Assistant/Project Manager, at 670-237-6519, but only until January 22, 2021.

Questions shall be submitted in writing to Ms. Prater, via hand delivery to CPA, or via email to wprater@cnmiports.com by no later than 5:00 p.m., Friday, January 22, 2021. Responses to questions or requests for information will be provided to all proposers who attend the mandatory pre-proposal conference.

Proposers shall submit one (1) original and four (4) copies of the proposals, sealed in an envelope and marked on the cover package outside as follows: **"Proposal for General Construction Repairs/Replacement for SIA ARFF Training Facility, Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport, CPA-SA-001-19"**. Proposals must be submitted by no later than **5:00 P.M. CHST, FRIDAY, JANUARY 29, 2021**, to the Office of the Executive Director at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport. All proposals shall become property of the Commonwealth Ports Authority.

FOR THE COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY

/s/ CHRISTOPHER S. TENORIO
Executive Director

Date: December 17, 2020

Thank You!
Thank you to each and every person who submitted a nomination to A Christmas Surprise on Saipan. The remarkable stories of perseverance in the face of adversity remind us how strong the CNMI truly is. While we could only choose one winning family, we want to express our sincere gratitude to all who submitted a nomination. We had well over 150 nominations to read through, and every story pulled at our heartstrings.
During our nomination review, the top two stories we were deciding between actually turned out to be for the same family, but different family members were nominated. We knew we had found a family who truly needed the support and gift of A Christmas Surprise on Saipan. Thank you to Tomeko Kaipat and Vicente Reyes for nominating the winning family.
We look forward to continuing this initiative in 2021 to help even more people!
Christmas Surprise SAIPAN
A Christmas Surprise on Saipan
Executive Committee

UNITED STATES
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

NOTICE OF COUNCIL MEETING

The Council's 4th Quarter General Membership meeting scheduled for December 30, 2020 is postponed until further notice.

Pursuant to Public Law 8-41, Section 12, the CNMI Council on Developmental Disabilities hereby gives notice that it will hold its 4th Quarter General Membership Meeting on December 30, 2020 from 9:30am to 12:30pm at the Pacific Islands Club, Charley's Cabaret, Saipan.

AGENDA

I. Call to Order
II. Roll Call
III. Review & Adoption of Agenda of December 30, 2020
IV. Review & Adoption of Meeting Minutes of July 22, 2020
V. Reports
  a. Chairperson
  b. State Plan Committee Chairperson
  c. Fiscal Committee Chairperson
  d. Executive Director
VI. Old Business
  a. COVID-19 Pandemic Update
  b. Emergency Preparedness Update
VII. New Business
  a. DD Basic Grant State Plan Development Survey
  b. Assistive Technology Low Tech Tip
  c. March 2021 - DD Awareness Month
  d. Disability Awareness Campaign
VIII. Action Items
  a. Ratify the Approval of the Amended FY 2020 DD Basic Grant Budget
  b. Ratify the Approval of the Amended FY 2020 Assistive Technology Grant Budget
IX. Miscellaneous
X. Next Meeting – March 2021
XI. Adjournment

POSTPONED

Note: Pursuant to P.L. 8-41, Section 13(a) 7, the Council may vote to meet in Executive Session.

In accordance to the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), individuals who wish to attend this meeting and require special accommodations are requested to call the Council 5 days in advance at 664-7000. The Public is welcome to submit written or 3 minutes oral comments regarding the agenda above.

/s/ Jan Barcinas
Chairperson

This ad was paid for by funds from the DD Basic Grant Part A (Administrative)

GRANITE®

Granite Construction Co Guam has employment opportunites for the following trades for a project located in **Saipan CNMI**:

Foremen (5)
Carpenters (15)
Masons (10)
Ironworkers (10)
Laborers (10)

Project: FEMA Permanent Housing Construction, Saipan CNMI

Only U.S Qualified Workers Will Be Considered

Please pick up an application at
Room Number 239 at the Surfrider Hotel Resort,
Chalan Kanoa, Beach Road, Saipan.

Hours of Operation: 7:00 am to 4:00 pm
Telephone: 670-235-7873

Deadline to apply is December 30, 2020

Granite Construction Co Guam is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer of Minorities, Females, Protected Veterans, Individuals With Disabilities and is a Drug-Alcohol Free Work Place.

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
Office of the Executive Director

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-21-005

A-2, A-5 AND A-6 SEWER LIFT STATION RENOVATION

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the A-2, A-5 and A-6 Sewer Lift Station Renovation project in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The project consists of the renovation of the existing A-2, A-5 and A-6 sewer lift stations, including but not limited to the renovation of the existing generator buildings or the construction of a new generator building, the renovation or relocation of the wet wells with all new pipings, fittings, pumps, generators, and other equipment and appurtenances. The project also includes the installation of a temporary by-pass system and the relocation of existing utilities to accommodate construction activities. The work shall be done in accordance with the Project Plans and Specifications and without disruption to the daily operation of the sewer system. CUC requires the Project to be completed in ***365* calendar days** from date of award of contract.

The project is funded by a grant from the United States of Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of approval for project award from USEPA.

Prospective Bidders must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $200.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by site visits will be held on December 16, 2020 at 10:00 AM (ChST) at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) copies of the bid must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **"CUC-IFB-21-005, A-2, A-5 and A-6 Sewer Lift Station Renovation"** to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) January 6, 2021**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time or post-marked before due date and time.

Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement this form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.

Bids shall be accompanied by a bid guarantee of not less than fifteen percent (15%) of the amount of the bid. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General.

A *Payment Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent and a *Performance Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract. Bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from registered Proponents and must be submitted in writing **no later than 10:00 a.m. (ChST) on December 18, 2020** to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Nicolette Villagomez, CUC Water & Wastewater, Engineer nicolette.villagomez@cucgov.org and Christie L. Sablan, CUC P&S, Senior Administrative Technician christie.sablan@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any imperfection in the bid proposal in the best interest of the government. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY BOYER SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
Office of the Executive Director

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-21-011

ISLEY BOOSTER II TRANSMISSION AND BOOSTER PUMP UPGRADE

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the Construction of Isley Booster II Transmission and Booster Pump Upgrade in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The project consists of upgrading of existing Isley Booster II Pump Station (IB-2); installation of new transmission line to the existing Dandan tank; rehabilitation of existing IB-2 concrete sump tank, yard piping, aboveground flowmeter and valve station with concrete pad, and all other appurtenances at the IB-2 site; construction of a new chlorine and electrical building; installation of new booster pump system (triplex system); construction of new perimeter security fencing and facility lighting; and restoration of existing asphalt concrete road. The work shall be done in accordance with the Project Plans and Specifications and without disruption to the daily operation of the water system.

This project is funded by a grant from the United States of Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of approval for project award from USEPA.

CUC requires the Project to be completed in **300 calendar days** from date of award of contract.

Prospective Bidders for this IFB must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $200.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by site visits will be held on **December 15, 2020 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies of the bid must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **"CUC-IFB-21-011, Isley Booster II Transmission and Booster Pump Upgrade** to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on January 05, 2021**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time or post-marked before due date and time.

Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms.

Bidders may supplement this form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. **Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.**

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

A Bid Guarantee of not less than fifteen (15%) of the total bid price shall accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General.

A Payment Bond of one hundred (100%) percent and a Performance Bond of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

All bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

All questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from registered Proponents and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 a.m. (ChST) on December 21, 2020** to Mr. Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email – manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Mr. Edgar Tuazon, CUC Water/Wastewater Engineer via email edgar.tuazon@cucgov.org and Ms. Marcela Tenorio, Administrative Technician Senior via email - marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any non-material imperfection in the bid proposal in the best interest of the government. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Officer

World

South Korea COVID-19 cases, deaths spike again

South Korea has added another new 1,092 infections of the coronavirus in a resurgence that is erasing hard-won epidemiological gains and eroding public confidence in the government's ability to handle the outbreak.

The figures released by the Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency on Wednesday brought the national caseload to 52,550, with more than 13,130 cases added in the last two weeks alone.

Seventeen COVID-19 patients died in the past 24 hours, bringing the death toll to 739 as concerns grow about a shortage in intensive care beds. At least 284 of the country's 15,085 active patients were in serious or critical condition.

South Korea had been seen as a success story against COVID-19 after health workers managed to contain a major outbreak in its southeastern region in spring, when the majority of infections were linked to a single church congregation in Daegu city.

But critics say the country gambled on its own success by easing social distancing restrictions to help the economy. The spread of the virus is now mainly in the densely populated capital region, and health workers are struggling mightily to track infections occurring just about everywhere, including hospitals, long-term care facilities and army units.

The government has restored some social distancing restrictions in recent weeks and will clamp down on private social gatherings of five or more people between Christmas Eve and Jan. 3. Restaurants could be fined if they accept large groups, ski resorts and national parks will be closed, and hotels cannot sell more than 50% of their rooms during the period.

In other developments in the Asia-Pacific region:

—Authorities will temporarily ease pandemic restrictions over most of Sydney to let more children attend Christmas gatherings as COVID-19 cases linked to a cluster in the city's northern beaches reached 100. While Sydney residents will be limited to having 10 people in their homes, children under the age of 12 will not be counted in that number from Thursday through Saturday. A lockdown in the beach communities at the heart of the cluster was being eased in some sections. Seven new cases linked to the cluster were detected in the latest 24-hour period. The cluster was first detected last week, although how the U.S.-strain reached the area is unknown. ***(AP)***

Israel heads to new elections as govt collapses

JERUSALEM (AP)—Israel's divided government collapsed early Wednesday, triggering the country's fourth election in under two years and bringing an unprecedented threat to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's lengthy grip on power.

Netanyahu, who is used to labeling his opponents as weak leftists, finds himself confronted by a trio of disgruntled former aides who share his hardline ideology, led by a popular lawmaker who recently broke away from the prime minister's Likud party. Whether Netanyahu can fend off these challengers or not, the country is almost certain to be led by a right-wing politician opposed to concessions to the Palestinians, complicating hopes of the incoming Biden administration to restart peace talks.

The prospects of Israel's center-left bloc appear worse than in previous contests because its leader, Defense Minister Benny Gantz, entered into the ill-fated alliance with Netanyahu. Gantz has lost the support of much of his disappointed base, and the bloc has been left leaderless.

Netanyahu and Gantz formed their coalition last May after battling to a stalemate in three consecutive elections. They said they were putting aside their personal rivalry to form an "emergency" government focused on guiding the country through the health and economic crises caused by the pandemic. Under the deal, Gantz assumed the new role of "alternate prime minister" and was assured he would trade places with Netanyahu next November in a rotation agreement halfway through their term.

The immediate cause of the collapse was their failure to pass a budget by the midnight Tuesday deadline. That caused the parliament to automatically dissolve and set new elections for late March.

But the deeper cause was their troubled partnership, which was plagued by mutual hostility and mistrust from the outset. For seven months, Gantz has suffered a number of humiliations and been kept out of the loop on key decisions, such as a series of U.S.-brokered diplomatic agreements with Arab countries. Netanyahu accuses Gantz's Blue and White party of acting as an "opposition within the government."

At the heart of this dysfunctional relationship is Netanyahu's corruption trial. Gantz has accused Netanyahu of undermining their power-sharing deal in hopes of remaining in office throughout his trial, which is to kick into high gear in February when witnesses begin to take the stand. He and other critics believe Netanyahu ultimately hopes to form a new government capable of appointing loyalists to sensitive positions who could grant him immunity or dismiss the charges against him.

"A criminal defendant with three indictments is dragging the country to a fourth round of elections," Blue and White said Tuesday night. "If there wasn't a trial, there would be a budget and there wouldn't be elections."

Netanyahu is charged with fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes in a series of scandals in which he is accused of offering favors to powerful media figures in exchange for positive news coverage about him and his family. His legal troubles, and questions about his suitability to govern, have been the central issue in the string of recent elections.

"The ongoing political crisis will continue as long as Mr. Netanyahu remains prime minister and no government can be formed without him," said Yohanan Plesner, a former lawmaker who is president of the Israel Democracy Institute.

"I think it is quite safe to assume that this won't end until either Mr. Netanyahu is replaced or if he finds a way, through legislation or political maneuvering, to either put his trial on hold or suspend it altogether," he said.

In the previous three elections, Netanyahu was unable to put together a majority coalition with his traditional religious and nationalist allies. Yet he controlled enough seats to prevent his opponents from cobbling together an alternate coalition.

According to recent opinion polls, that equation may be changing, with a number of rivals poised to control a parliamentary majority without him.

Those rivals are led by Gideon Saar, a stalwart in Netanyahu's Likud who announced this month that he was breaking away and forming a new party. Saar, who once served as Netanyahu's Cabinet secretary, has accused the prime minister of turning the Likud into a "personality cult" focused on ensuring its leader's political survival.

China imposes new visa limits in back-and-forth with US

BEIJING (AP)—China hit back with reciprocal actions Tuesday against unnamed American officials in the latest back-and-forth, following a U.S. announcement of new visa restrictions on Chinese officials.

The Foreign Ministry also called on President Donald Trump not to sign into law legislation approved by Congress on Tibet.

The visa action came in response to a State Department announcement Monday that said the U.S. will deny visas to Chinese Communist Party officials whose policies or actions are aimed at repressing religious groups, ethnic minorities, dissidents or others.

"China has taken reciprocal countermeasures against the U.S. individuals and their family members who are primarily responsible for recent interference in China's internal affairs," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said.

He did not say who or how many people were affected.

Wang also said China opposed the Tibetan Policy and Support Act, which calls for the establishment of a U.S. consulate in Tibet as well as support for Tibetans to choose the next Dalai Lama, their spiritual leader, on their own.

Congress approved the bill Monday as part of a $900 billion coronavirus relief package that also included other unrelated year-end legislation.

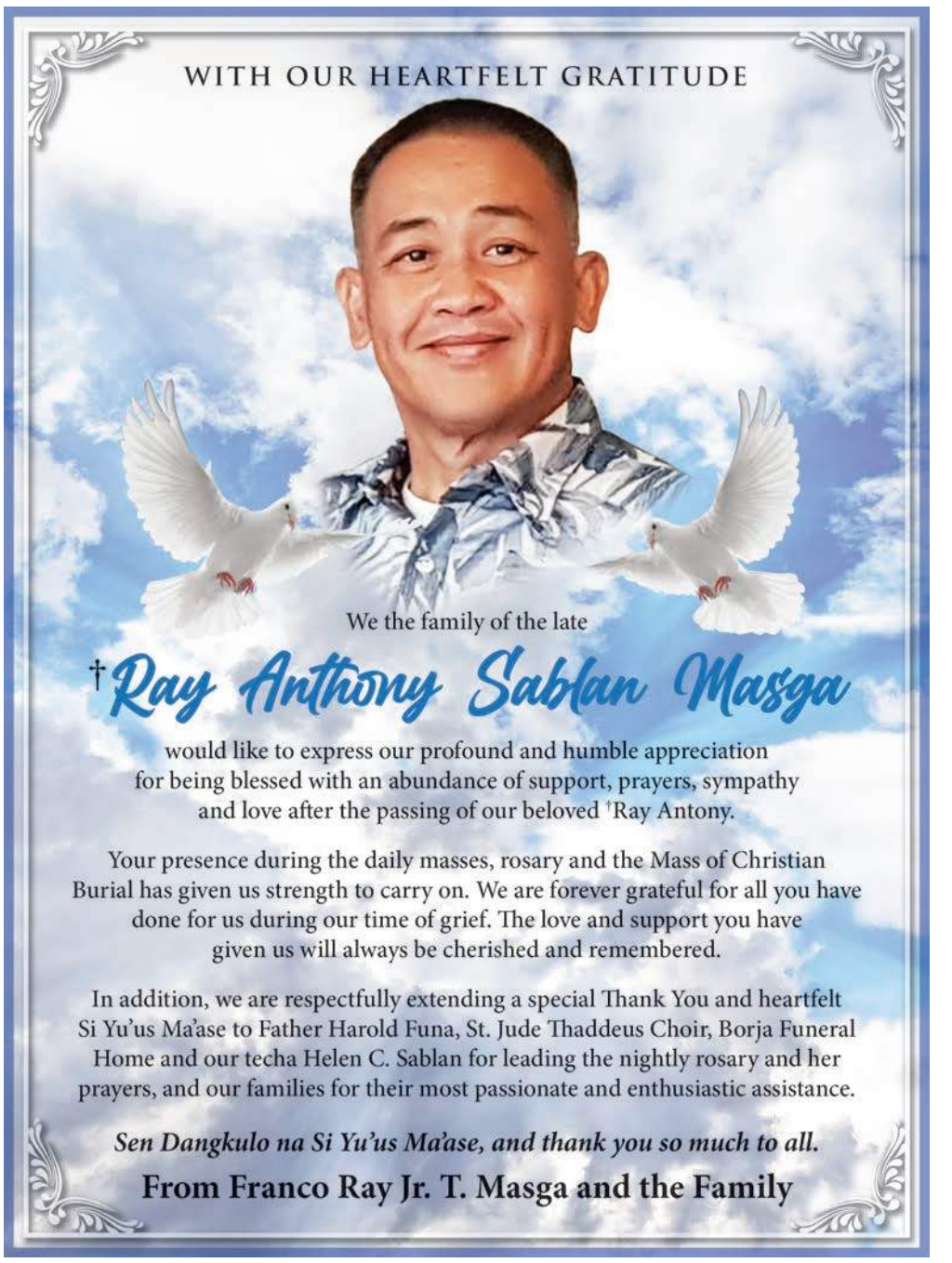
The U.S. has placed an escalating series of sanctions, visa bans and financial restrictions on Chinese government officials and Communist Party members this year. The U.S.-China relationship has become increasingly fraught as the two countries battle over issues from human rights to the coronavirus and trade.

Previous visa restrictions and financial sanctions applied to officials "involved in the horrific abuses taking place in Xinjiang, restrictions on access to Tibet, and the destruction of Hong Kong's promised autonomy," Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in Monday's statement.

"Today's action creates additional restrictions applicable to all (Communist Party) officials engaged in such repressive activities, no matter their location," he said.

Wang criticized the U.S. for having "weaponized" visa policy.

"The issues of Tibet, Taiwan and Hong Kong concerning Chinese sovereignty and territorial integrity are purely internal affairs of China, and no foreign forces should interfere," he said.


WITH OUR HEARTFELT GRATITUDE
We the family of the late
†Ray Anthony Sablan Masga
would like to express our profound and humble appreciation for being blessed with an abundance of support, prayers, sympathy and love after the passing of our beloved †Ray Antony.
Your presence during the daily masses, rosary and the Mass of Christian Burial has given us strength to carry on. We are forever grateful for all you have done for us during our time of grief. The love and support you have given us will always be cherished and remembered.
In addition, we are respectfully extending a special Thank You and heartfelt Si Yu'us Ma'ase to Father Harold Funa, St. Jude Thaddeus Choir, Borja Funeral Home and our techa Helen C. Sablan for leading the nightly rosary and her prayers, and our families for their most passionate and enthusiastic assistance.
Sen Dangkulo na Si Yu'us Ma'ase, and thank you so much to all.
From Franco Ray Jr. T. Masga and the Family

Environment

Scientists focus on bats for clues to prevent next pandemic

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP)—Night began to fall in Rio de Janeiro's Pedra Branca state park as four Brazilian scientists switched on their flashlights to traipse along a narrow trail of mud through dense rainforest. The researchers were on a mission: capture bats and help prevent the next global pandemic.

A few meters ahead, nearly invisible in the darkness, a bat made high-pitched squeaks as it strained its wings against the thin nylon net that had ensnared it. One of the researchers removed the bat, which used its pointed teeth to bite her gloved fingers.

The November nighttime outing was part of a project at Brazil's state-run Fiocruz Institute to collect and study viruses present in wild animals—including bats, which many scientists believe were linked to the outbreak of COVID-19.

The goal now is to identify other viruses that may be highly contagious and lethal in humans, and to use that information to devise plans to stop them from ever infecting people—to forestall the next potential global disease outbreak before it gets started.

In a highly connected world, an outbreak in one place endangers the entire globe, just as the coronavirus did. And the Brazilian team is just one among many worldwide racing to minimize the risk of a second pandemic this century.

To some, it might seem too soon to contemplate the next global outbreak, with the world still grappling with the devastating fallout of the ongoing one. But scientists say it's highly like that, without savvy intervention, another novel virus will jump from animal to human host and find the conditions to spread like wildfire.

As this pandemic has shown, modern transport can disperse the pathogen to all corners of the globe in a matter of hours and spread easily in densely populated cities.

It's not a question of if, but of when, according to Dr. Gagandeep Kang, an infectious diseases expert at Christian Medical College at Vellore in southern India.

She pointed to previous research that found India was among the most likely places in the world for such a "spillover" event to occur, due to population density and increasing human and livestock incursion into its dense tropical forests teeming with wildlife.

It's no coincidence that many scientists are focusing attention on the world's only flying mammals—bats.

AP

A researcher for Brazil's state-run Fiocruz Institute takes an oral swab sample from a bat captured in the Atlantic Forest, at Pedra Branca state park, near Rio de Janeiro, Tuesday, Nov. 17, 2020.

Bats are thought to be the original or intermediary hosts for multiple viruses that have spawned recent epidemics, including COVID-19, SARS, MERS, Ebola, Nipah virus, Hendra virus and Marburg virus. A 2019 study found that of viruses originating from the five most common mammalian sources—primates, rodents, carnivores, ungulates and bats—those from bats are the most virulent in humans.

Bats are a diverse group, with more than 1,400 species flitting across every continent except Antarctica. But what many have in common are adaptations that allow them to carry viruses that are deadly in humans and livestock while exhibiting minimal symptoms themselves—meaning they are able travel and shed those viruses, instead of being quickly hobbled.

"The secret is that bats have unusual immune systems, and that's related to their ability to fly," said Raina Plowright, an epidemiologist who studies bats at Montana State University.

To get off the ground and sustain flight requires an incredible amount of energy, with bats' metabolic rate increasing sixteen-fold, Plowright said. "You'd expect them to get cell damage from all that metabolic exertion," she said.

But that doesn't happen. Instead, bats are remarkably resilient, with many species living more than 30 years—highly unusual for such small mammals.

Plowright and other bat scientists believe evolutionary tweaks that help bats recover from the stress of flying also give them extra protection against pathogens.

"Bats seem to have evolved a collateral benefit of flight—resistance to deal with some of the nastiest viruses known to science," said Arinjay Banerjee, a virologist at McMaster University in Canada.

While scientists are still untangling the mystery, two leading theories are that bats may have evolved what Banerjee called "an efficient DNA repair mechanism" or that their bodies may tightly regulate inflammation triggers and not overreact to viral infections.

Probing the secrets of bat immune systems may help scientists understand more about when bats do shed viruses, as well as providing hints for possible future medical treatment strategies, he said.

Bats and other animals that carry pathogens don't innately pose a risk to humans—unless conditions are right for a spillover event. "The virus has to come out of the host for us to get infected," said Cara Brook, a disease ecologist at the University of California, Berkeley.

The bad news: Increasing destruction and fragmentation of habitats worldwide—especially biodiverse areas like tropical forests—means "we are seeing higher rates of contact between wildlife and humans, creating more opportunities for spillover," she said.

That's why the Brazilian researchers chose Pedra Branca park. As one of the world's largest forests within an urban area, it offers a constant interaction of wild animals with the thousands of humans and domestic animals in surrounding communities. The scientists are studying not just bats, but also small primates, wild cats and domestic cats in homes with confirmed COVID-19 cases.

Scientists and governments would stand a better chance at containing future outbreaks if they had faster notice of when and where they begin, said Ian Mackay, a virologist at Australia's University of Queensland.

"Ongoing, constant, nonstop surveillance," along the lines of the flu labs set up by the World Health Organization across the globe, could help researchers be better prepared, he said. He also suggested that labs for virus discovery could regularly sample waste water or materials from hospitals.

In India, a National Mission on Biodiversity and Human Well-Being has been pending since 2018 and will likely be launched next year. Abi Tamim Vanak, a conservation scientist at Ashok Trust for Research in Ecology and Environment in Bengaluru, said that a core part of the plan is to set up 25 sentinel surveillance sites across the country in both rural and urban areas.

"They will be the first line of defense," he said.

A varied patchwork of virus surveillance programs exists in several countries, but funding tends to wax and wane with the political climate and sense of urgency.

Among the most ambitious endeavors is the Global Virome Project, which aims to discover 500,000 new viruses over 10 years.

The U.S. Agency for International Development recently announced the launch of the $100 million STOP Spillover project, an effort led by scientists at Tufts University and including global partners to study zoonotic diseases in Africa and Asia.

One approach that won't help, scientists say, is treating bats as the enemy – vilifying them, throwing stones or trying to burn them out of caves.

This spring, villagers in the Indian state of Rajasthan identified bat colonies in abandoned forts and palaces and killed hundreds with bats and sticks. They also sealed some crevices where the bats lived, effectively trapping them. In the Indian state of Karnataka, villagers cut down old trees where bats tend to roost.

Scientists say those those tactics are likely to backfire.

An investigation by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Ugandan health authorities found that, after a mining operation attempted to exterminate bats from a cave in Uganda, the remaining bats exhibited higher infection levels of Marburg virus. This led to Uganda's most severe outbreak of Marburg hemorrhagic fever, caused by the virus, in 2012.

"Stress is a huge factor in upsetting the natural balance that bats have with their viruses—the more you stress bats, the more they shed viruses," said Vikram Misra, a virologist at the University of Saskatchewan in Canada.

Although orders issued by Indian forest officials reiterating the complete ban on killing of wildlife and information campaigns to dispel myths were largely successful, convincing people not to attack bats means dispelling long-running cultural assumptions.

"People have a lot of misconceptions about bats. They're nocturnal and look a little weird flying, and there's a lot of literature and culture built around bats being scary," said Hannah Kim Frank, a biologist at Tulane University. "But bats aren't aggressive—and attacking bats doesn't help control diseases."

Bats also play vital roles in ecosystems: They consume insects like mosquitos, pollinate plants like agave, and disperse seeds.

"We actually need bats in the wild to consume insects that otherwise destroy cotton, corn and pecan harvests," said Kristen Lear, an ecologist at Bat Conservational International.

A better approach to minimize disease risk, Frank said, is simply to minimize contact between wild bats and people and livestock.

She suggested that research on when bats migrate, and when new pups are born, could inform decisions about when people should avoid certain areas or keep their livestock penned up.

In North America, some scientists advocate restricting public access to caves where bats roost.

"Cave gating—bat-friendly gates, built with iron crossbars—can keep humans out and allow bats to move freely," said Kate Langwig, an infectious disease ecologist at Virginia Tech. "If we leave the bats alone, and don't try to hurt or exterminate them, they are going to be healthier."

Perhaps the most significant factor bringing bats into more frequent contact with people and domestic animals is the destruction of habitat, which forces bats to seek out new foraging and roosting grounds.

In Australia, widespread destruction of winter flowering eucalyptus trees that provide nectar for fruit bats—known locally as "flying foxes"—prompted the bats to move into areas closer to human settlements looking for alternate meals, including to a suburb of Brisbane called Hendra.

There, the bats transmitted a virus to horses, which in turn infected people. First identified in 1994 and named Hendra virus, it is highly lethal, killing 60% of people and 75% of horses infected.

A similar chain of events took place in Bangladesh, when habitat destruction drove fruit bats into cities, where they spread Nipah virus, which causes severe encephalitis in humans, by licking date palm sap from collection barrels.

To potentially reverse the movement of bats, Montana State University's Plowright and colleagues based in Australia are studying restoring the bats' original habitat.

"Every city in Australia is full of fruit bats that lost their winter habitats," she said. "The idea is to plant new forests and make sure they are away from places with domestic animals and people."

Whether the goal is to curb the spread of known zoonotic diseases or to reduce the risk of new ones emerging as pandemics, the strategy is the same: Reduce contact between humans and wild animals.

"In the history of COVID-19, bats have been more victim than victimizer," said Ricardo Moratelli, coordinator of the Fiocruz project in Brazil. "Bats host a large number of parasites, and they deal with these parasites well. The problem is when human beings enter into contact with them."

Life & Style

Pedro Pascal dons different armor for 'Wonder Woman 1984'

When Pedro Pascal started to think about his "Wonder Woman 1984" villain Max Lord, one name came to mind: Gordon Gekko. Who better to model his power suit-wearing striver on than the embodiment of 1980s greed and callousness?

But director Patty Jenkins had something different in mind than the Michael Douglas character. (Both say it wasn't Donald Trump, either.)

"She pulled me away from that," Pascal said. "She was like, 'that's not the polish that we're after.'"

It was a nerve-wracking realization for Pascal, who thought he'd be able to hide behind the slickness of a cold and calculating finance guy. But it was a call that he ended up loving in the end.

"What we went after was so much more unpredictable and exposed," he said. "The thing that would ultimately anchor me to him was far more vulnerable than what a Gordon Gekko-type would be."

In the film, which debuts in theaters and on HBO Max in the U.S. on Christmas Day, Max Lord is a divorced dad, minor television personality and wannabe oil tycoon whose wealth is mostly smoke and mirrors until he gets hold of a powerful, wish-granting stone.

"He's an immigrant who is trying to live up to appearing to be his idea of the American dream," Jenkins said.

It was producer Charles Roven, who he'd worked with on "Triple Frontier," who initially called Pascal saying that Jenkins wanted to meet.

"I just adored him. I thought he was such a great guy and such an interesting person and an excellent actor," Jenkins said. "But when I was sitting and thinking about who could pull this off, I just knew that he could do it. There was something about Pedro that I knew he could hit every different mark and also reveal a side of himself I wasn't sure that even he had gotten to use yet."

This image released by Warner Bros. Entertainment shows Pedro Pascal, center, in a scene from "Wonder Woman 1984." AP

Pascal had long been a fan of Jenkins' work: He remembers seeing "Monster" in a Manhattan theater and having to wait until the credits played out to leave because he was crying so hard, and being especially moved by the No Man's Land sequence in "Wonder Woman."

In between the two films, they'd also crossed paths when Jenkins directed him in a pilot that never got picked up. So when the chance to work with her again came up, he knew what his answer was going to be.

"I didn't care what it was," Pascal said. "I still have trouble wrapping my head around the opportunity."

He was, he admitted, a little nervous about the costumes though.

"I'm not one to pull off an '80s look very well, in my opinion," Pascal laughed. "I felt like I (would) look stupid in baggy stuff."

On the 1980s-set Netflix show "Narcos" Pascal even lobbied for his DEA agent character to wear more 1970s styles. But, he said, the Oscar-winning costume designer Lindy Hemming was a "magician" on "Wonder Woman 1984."

With an incredible attention to detail, she created suits for Max Lord that Pascal said were at turns "garish and sophisticated," "colorful and stylish" and "just on the verge of obnoxious.

"It was a fascinating thing," he said.

Since getting cast in "Wonder Woman 1984," Pascal's star has risen immeasurably thanks to the wildly popular Star Wars spinoff "The Mandalorian," which just concluded its second season on Disney+. He remembers being in initial talks for the role with Jon Favreau right before flying to London to film "Wonder Woman."

And although Max Lord and the mysterious bounty hunter couldn't be more different, there is a fairly poignant similarity that's not lost on Pascal.

"Max Lord has such an exterior armor with hair products and power suits ... which is such a mask with so much going on just beneath it, that contradicts so much what sort of physical message he's portray with his persona," Pascal said. "(It's) a lot like the Mandalorian." ***(AP)***

Hallmark holiday movies offer viewers balm in tough year

NEW YORK (AP)—For the past decade, the Hallmark Channel has been a reliable destination for holiday programming. And in a year when many Americans are homebound because of the COVID-19 pandemic, network executives say there's been a craving for the feel-good movies.

Hallmark's ratings are up 2% over 2019's holiday season, the Nielsen company said. That may not seem like much, but year-to-year increases are the exception rather than the rule in modern television.

The network turned its programming over to holiday fare on Oct. 23 and has been the top-rated entertainment cable channel, excluding news and sports, for the fourth quarter, Nielsen said.

"What we have seen is just how much our movies mean to our viewers," said Michelle Vicary, programming chief.

When coronavirus-related closures began in March, Hallmark tried to calm anxieties by airing a series of its holiday movies then.

But this season, COVID-19 did not affect the type of movies Hallmark made or how they were scheduled, Vicary said. Of the 40 new movies planned for this season, only one had to be canceled because filming couldn't be done because of the pandemic.

"We made a choice not to let COVID affect us thematically," she said. "There are a lot of places you can find information about COVID. What we provided was a respite from that."

This season's most popular movie has been "If I Only Had Christmas," about a perky publicist who teams with a cynical executive to help a charity. It stars Candace Cameron Bure, probably the most reliable draw among a collection of actors who often return to Hallmark each holiday season.

Hallmark says it has also been pleased with the reception for "The Christmas House," the first time the conservative programmer has prominently featured gay characters in a holiday film.

CBS was the top-rated broadcast network last week, averaging 4.4 million viewers in prime time. NBC had 3.8 million, Fox had 2.9 million, ABC had 2.7 million, Univision had 870,000, Ion Television had 830,000 and Telemundo had 620,000.

Fox News Channel was the most popular cable network, watched by an average of 2.38 million people in prime time. ESPN had 2.07 million, MSNBC had 2 million, Hallmark had 1.72 million and CNN had 1.68 million. The only non-news or sports programs among cable's 40 most popular last week were two Hallmark movies.

ABC's "World News Tonight" won the evening news ratings race, averaging 9.7 million viewers. NBC's "Nightly News" had 7.9 million and the "CBS Evening News" had 5.9 million.

For the week of Dec. 14-20, the 20 most popular primetime programs, their networks and viewerships:

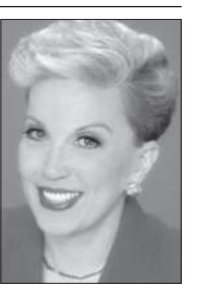
1. **NFL Football: Cleveland at N.Y. Giants,** NBC, 15.61 million.
2. **NFL Football: L.A. Chargers at Las Vegas,** Fox, 12.96 million.
3. **NFL Football: Baltimore at Cleveland,** ESPN, 12.42 million.
4. **"60 Minutes,"** CBS, 11.59 million.
5. **"NFL Pregame,"** NBC, 11.31 million.
6. **"NFL Postgame,"** Fox, 10.96 million.
7. **College Football: Alabama vs. Florida,** CBS, 8.92 million.
8. **"The Masked Singer,"** Fox, 7.41 million.
9. **"NFL Pregame,"** Fox, 7.34 million.
10. **"The Voice"** (Tuesday, 9 p.m.), NBC, 7.27 million.
11. **"The Voice"** (Monday), NBC, 7.09 million.
12. **"Football Night in America,"** NBC, 6.92 million.
13. **"Young Sheldon,"** CBS, 6.86 million.
14. **"Blue Bloods,"** CBS, 6.38 million.
15. **"Monday Night Kickoff,"** ESPN, 6 million.
16. **"The Voice"** (Tuesday, 8 p.m.), NBC, 5.89 million.
17. **"Garth & Trisha Live!"** CBS, 5.82 million.
18. **"Grey's Anatomy,"** ABC, 5.66 million.
19. **"Station 19,"** ABC, 5.63 million.
20. **"Magnum, P.I.,"** CBS, 5.48 million.

Mom feels betrayed by friend who snitched on her daughter

DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

FROM UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE



Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

DEAR ABBY: I have recently found out that someone I thought was a good friend is the person who snitched and got my daughter in serious trouble at school. Our daughters attended the same preschool, middle school and high school. Although they were friends, the friendship was more between us moms.

Before middle school graduation, the students had an outing at the beach. Some of the girls, my daughter included, decided to bring vodka and orange juice. A few days later, my daughter was called to the principal's office where she was thoroughly reprimanded. Any awards she was to receive were rescinded. I learned from one of the teachers that this "friend" is the person who turned her in.

Why didn't she come to me and tell me? I almost feel like she wanted my daughter to get in trouble. I have run into her a couple of times and have been cold and distant, but I want to confront her. I was going to write and tell her why. Do you think this is a good idea?

FURIOUS IN FLORIDA

DEAR FURIOUS: I don't blame you for being upset, but an eighth-grader bringing alcohol to a school celebration is wrong on many levels. I do NOT advise putting anything in writing. Convey your message and get the answer you want by doing it directly, face to face.

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: Thirty years ago, I dated a guy I'll call Allen. We had a child together. Our relationship ended when I found out I was pregnant. He married a woman he chose over me. I later married someone else, whose name is on my child's birth certificate.

Fast-forward 30 years. We are now back in each other's lives. I told my son about his biological father, and they are getting to know each other. Allen has children from his marriage, which lasted about 25 years. His wife is now deceased.

Allen's two other children and his parents and extended family know nothing about our son. He's afraid to tell them, although it was before they were born and before he was married. Do you think he should tell everyone?

SECRET KEEPER IN CALIFORNIA

DEAR SECRET KEEPER: Yes, I do. As you stated, this happened before his marriage to his late wife, and your (and his) son should not be regarded as a shameful secret. However, I cannot make this decision FOR Allen, and neither should you. If he isn't strong enough to stand up and stand by his first child, then you should reconsider your relationship with him.

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: My wife and I have been married 50-some years. While we were discussing sex and the pandemic, she revealed that she could imagine having sex with someone while both of them were masked. I said no, the masks would become superfluous and would go just before the clothes. Who is right?

HYPOTHETICALLY SPEAKING

DEAR H.S.: Are you serious? Your wife gave you some valuable information that you are ignoring. Where is your sense of humor? Try it. You might like it and discover the masks stay on until, in the heat of passion, they slip off (or not).

To order "How to Write Letters for All Occasions," send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby – Letter Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. Shipping and handling are included in the price.

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

WELL, THE SHOPPING IS DONE, THE PRESENTS ARE WRAPPED AND SENT, AND CALVIN'S IN BED. FOR THE FIRST TIME THIS MONTH, THERE'S NOTHING THAT HAS TO BE DONE.
I KNOW... SOMETIMES THIS SEASON REALLY SEEMS OUT OF CONTROL. WE DON'T OFTEN THINK ABOUT WHAT IT'S ALL SUPPOSED TO MEAN.
MM-HMM. IT'S GOOD TO SIT BY A COZY FIRE AND TAKE SOME QUIET TIME TO REFLECT.
WHAT'S THIS?! SANTA FLAMBÉ??
12-24

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

STAYING UP TO SEE SANTA?
THIS YEAR I'M GOING TO CATCH HIM IN THE ACT!
THEY SAY HE'S A MASTER OF DISGUISE
HE WON'T FOOL ME!
HO! HO! HO!
JIM DAVIS 12-24

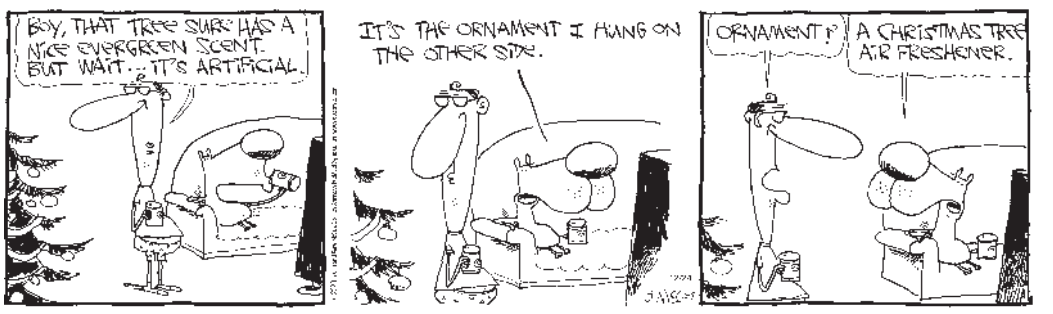
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

WAIT. ARE THESE ALL THE COOKIES WE HAVE LEFT?
YEAH. YOUR DAD'S BEEN GETTING AFTER THEM PRETTY HARD.
I CAN'T GIVE SANTA THESE WEAK COOKIE LEAVINGS!!
2020'S BEEN AWFUL! THE MAN DESERVES PEPPERIDGE FARM AT THE VERY LEAST!
12·24

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy


BOY, THAT TREE SURE HAS A NICE EVERGREEN SCENT. BUT WAIT... IT'S ARTIFICIAL.
IT'S THE ORNAMENT I HANG ON THE OTHER SIDE.
ORNAMENT?
A CHRISTMAS TREE AIR FRESHENER.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 "Zounds!"
5 Wilde-beests
9 Little rascal
12 Sultry Horne
13 Bart's sister
14 Museum-funding org.
15 Hostel manager
17 Pester
18 Fall guy
19 Make amends
21 — and fro
22 Moral principle
24 Athletic shoe brand
27 The Browns, on score-boards
28 Must have
31 Sawbuck
32 Billboards
33 Big D.C. lobby
34 Carte
36 Dog doc
37 Remain
38 Bid
40 Atop
41 Party gift
43 Neptune neighbor
47 "— tree falls ..."
48 1976 Winter Olympics site
51 Museum display
52 Slightly
53 Caron title role
54 Sock part
55 Ostrich kin
56 Sports figure?

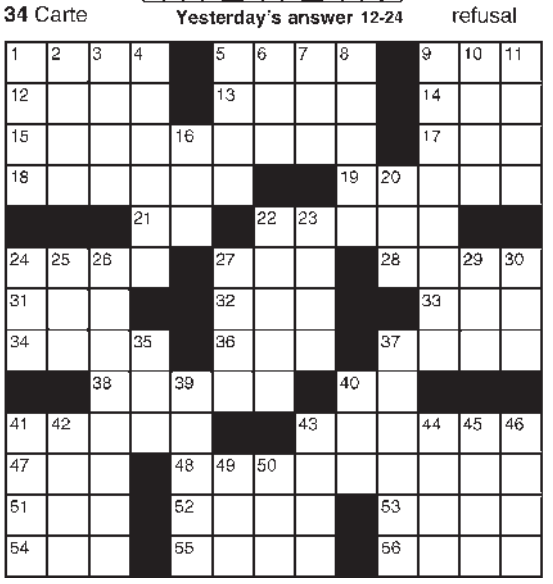
DOWN

1 Yale students
2 Bloke
3 — Domini
4 Actress Fanning
5 Jubilation
6 Chill in the air
7 Work with
8 Jazz legend Vaughan
9 Guiltless
10 Intend
11 Leaf
16 Conceit
20 Stannum
22 Church leader
23 Try out
24 $ dispenser
25 Victory sign
26 Start some-thing new
27 Grotto
29 Historic period
30 Calendar box
35 Martian's ride
37 Tangles
39 Monas-tery figure
40 Sphere
41 Authorita-tive order
42 Roundish do
43 Fed. food inspector
44 Night, in Paris
45 Pac-12 sch.
46 "SNL" segment
49 To the — degree
50 Scot's refusal

Solution time: 24 mins.

S	O	T	S	■	L	E	A	■	S	W	A	P	
O	H	A	N	■	I	N	N	■	P	A	N	E	
P	E	C	A	N	L	O	G	■	A	T	T	A	
H	O	C	R	A	Y	■	S	P	A	R	E	E	S
■	■	■	E	S	P	■	E	R	R	■	■	■	
O	W	■	H	A	T	■	G	O	L	D	A		
W	O	O	D	■	D	I	P	■	W	O	O	I	
N	O	G	O	S	■	A	I	P	■	G	F	F	
■	■	■	C	R	A	M	■	E	R	R	■	■	■
S	C	A	M	P	I	■	D	O	G	■	E		
A	L	B	A	■	L	O	G	B	O	O	K	S	
N	E	I	N	■	L	O	E	■	S	T	E	P	
D	O	N	T	■	S	A	S	■	H	A	N		

Yesterday's answer 12-24



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call 1-900-226-5955! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Ryan Seacrest, 46; Stephenie Meyer, 47; Ricky Martin, 49; Diedrich Bader, 54.

Happy Birthday: Procrastination will not help you get where you want to go. Let your heart lead the way, and make the moves that feel right for you. Happiness is the perquisite of doing the right thing at the right time. Push forward with confidence, and live the life you want to live. Leave the past behind you, and look forward with optimism. Your numbers are 6, 11, 21, 24, 33, 43, 47.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Put your energy into something meaningful. Enjoy the festivities without overspending. Make arrangements with someone close. A new adventure will be the topic of conversation when talking to friends and family. Romance is in the stars. ✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Preparation, intelligence and putting your energy where it counts most will help you reach your goal. Emotions will be difficult to control. Don't let insecurity set in because of what someone says or does. Believe in yourself and you will do well. ✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Learn from mistakes. Don't go overboard trying to please others with lavish gifts or become disappointed if someone doesn't reciprocate. Last-minute shopping will lead to overspending. Buy fewer things. Offer your love, the goodies you make and your thoughtfulness. ✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* An intelligent move on your part will give you the edge. Listen and contribute insight into situations that arise when talking to close friends or relatives. What you have to offer will lead to unexpected rewards. A partnership looks promising. ✪✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Go over the pros and cons of a situation before you decide to get involved. You can eliminate emotional turmoil if you participate and do what's best for you. Distance yourself from negativity, and concentrate on being and doing your best. Romance is favored. ✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* Open up to close friends and relatives. You will receive information that will help you make decisions that will improve your life. An opportunity you didn't expect will transpire. Your intuition won't let you down. Follow your heart. ✪✪✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Don't get involved in other people's problems. If someone makes demands, offer suggestions, not your time or money. Look for a way to express your feelings to someone you love. Make romance a priority. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* A new beginning is heading your way. Don't take someone's word as truth. Verify facts, and leave no room for error when making plans. Procrastinating will not help you reach your goal. Set your goals and follow through. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Look at the big picture. Reach out to someone who shares your dream. Make plans to boost your morale and give you something exciting to talk about with relatives during the festive season. A personal change will lead to romance. ✪✪✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

COPYRIGHT 2007 UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Think, strategize and make your move. Let others know what you are thinking and what you want. Don't vacillate when you should believe in your abilities and push forward until you reach your goal. Reach out to those you love and celebrate. ✪✪✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* When unsure, stop and rethink your strategy. Be careful how you deal with friends and relatives. Be mindful of the difficulties others are experiencing. Make a promise to take better care of your health and emotional well-being. ✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Talk of change will lift your spirits. Share plans with people you haven't seen in some time, and you will alleviate the uncertainty that you or someone you care about is experiencing. Consider innovative ways to use your skills in the new year. ✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are brave, intuitive and flexible. You are innovative and entertaining.

Visit Eugenialast.com, or join Eugenia on Twitter/Facebook/LinkedIn. Copyright 2020 Andrews McMeel Syndication

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

		3	9		6	8		
			7	3	8			
8								6
7	9						6	3
	5						7	
2	3						8	4
1								8
			4	7	3			
		7	6		1	9		

Difficulty Level ★★★ 12/24

©2012 Conceptis Puzzles, Dist. by King Features Syndicate, Inc.

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

4	9	5	7	8	1	3	2	6
7	8	2	3	5	6	4	1	9
3	6	1	9	2	4	5	8	7
6	4	7	2	9	5	8	3	1
8	2	9	4	1	3	7	6	5
5	1	3	6	7	8	9	4	2
1	3	4	5	6	7	2	9	8
2	5	6	8	3	9	1	7	4
9	7	8	1	4	2	6	5	3

Difficulty Level ★★★

WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

SANTA CLAUS Solution: 11 letters

S	B	N	S	L	O	R	A	C	A	R	D	S	B	S
I	A	A	S	E	S	U	O	H	L	K	W	E	R	T
N	B	M	N	R	T	O	T	S	F	I	L	M	I	O
T	B	W	T	G	L	A	T	I	N	L	G	U	G	O
E	O	O	O	S	E	F	H	T	Y	S	S	H	H	B
R	N	N	S	R	I	L	E	D	R	A	E	B	T	K
K	A	S	W	G	K	R	E	T	E	R	E	V	E	S
L	T	I	N	O	R	T	H	M	A	R	N	Y	L	D
A	A	Y	E	N	M	I	H	C	O	O	A	L	O	E
A	L	D	N	I	K	T	S	I	R	H	C	L	P	C
S	E	Y	U	L	E	O	N	X	U	E	Y	O	J	K
L	V	N	G	L	Y	A	D	I	L	O	H	J	L	E
L	E	T	T	E	R	S	L	E	I	G	H	T	E	D
E	N	S	A	L	O	H	C	I	N	T	N	I	A	S
B	T	I	S	I	V	R	A	L	L	O	C	R	U	F

© 2020 Andrews McMeel Syndication www.wonderword.com 12/24

Angel, Babbo Natale, Beard, Bells, Belly, Boots, Bright, Cane, Cards, Carols, Chimney, Christkindl, Coat, Cold, Cool, Decked, Elves, Event, Father Christmas, Film, Fur Collar, Gifts, Holiday, Home, Houses, Jolly, Joyeux Noël, Letters, Lights, North, Pole, Red Hat, Saint Nicholas, Sinterklaas, Sleigh, Snowman, Suit, Visit, Winter, Work, Wreath, Yule

Yesterday's Answer: Fiber

The NEW **Treasury 41** can be purchased online at www.WonderWordBooks.com, or call 1-800-642-6480.

George's 33 send Clippers past Lakers in opener

AP
Los Angeles Clippers guard Paul George (13) shoots against the Los Angeles Lakers during the second half of an NBA game Tuesday, Dec. 22, 2020, in Los Angeles

LOS ANGELES (AP)—After the Los Angeles Lakers got their championship rings, the Los Angeles Clippers gave a performance that showed this retooled team is determined to contend for its own jewelry several months from now.

Paul George scored 26 of his 33 points in the second half, Kawhi Leonard added 26 points and the Los Angeles Clippers rallied past the Los Angeles Lakers on the NBA champions' ring ceremony night for a 116-109 victory Tuesday.

George went 13 of 18 with five 3-pointers in an outstanding first game since agreeing to add four years and $190 million to his contract with the Clippers, who never trailed in the latest meeting of Southern California's two NBA powerhouses. The Clippers beat the Lakers in the season opener for the second straight year while winning coach Tyronn Lue's debut.

The Clippers stayed in their locker room while the Lakers received their rings, but they emerged with purpose and determined play—from their two superstars in particular.

"Our focus was on us," Lue said. "The Lakers, they deserved that ring. They had a great year, and you can't take nothing away from them. Our focus wasn't really on the Lakers. They were the best team last year, so congratulations to them again, but now we're moving on."

LeBron James scored 22 points and Anthony Davis had 18 for the Lakers just 72 days after they finished off the Miami Heat in the NBA bubble.

The Lakers returned from the shortest offseason in league history and celebrated the franchise's 17th title, but they couldn't keep up with George and Leonard down the stretch. Lakers coach Frank Vogel also limited James to 28 minutes and Davis to 31, anticipating the long grind ahead on his veterans after a 10-week offseason.

"It's not ideal, but I do feel it's necessary to manage those guys' minutes the right way," Vogel said.

Serge Ibaka scored 15 points in his debut for the Clippers.

Nets 125, Warriors 99

Kevin Durant shook off 18 months of rust in a matter of minutes.

Durant looked good as new against his old team, Kyrie Irving was even better and the Brooklyn Nets emphatically kicked off the Steve Nash era with a victory over the Golden State Warriors.

Durant finished with 22 points in 25 minutes of his first official game since rupturing his Achilles tendon while playing for Golden State in Game 5 of the 2019 NBA Finals. It's a new start for Durant, but he did the same things he's been doing for years.

"I tried not to make too big a deal out of this whole thing and realize I've been playing this game since I was 8 years old, so just got to revert back to what I know," Durant said.

Irving led Brooklyn with 26 points and Caris LeVert scored 20 as the Nets led by as many as 38, pouring on the points the way the Phoenix Suns did when Nash was their point guard, or more recently Golden State did when Durant was their All-Star forward.

The Nets made the playoffs last season but now are expected to contend for the Eastern Conference title after finally getting Durant and Irving on the court together. They used the first game of the shortened, 72-game season to prove they might be worth the hype.

"I think our goals are a lot higher this year and we just want to be able to come in and dominate and do that consistently," Irving said.

Stephen Curry had 20 points and 10 assists for the Warriors, a depleted team that looks nothing like the powerhouse that won two titles in Durant's three seasons there.

Durant left shortly after having surgery following his injury and was expected to sit out the entire 2019-20 season even before it was suspended in March because of the coronavirus pandemic. Teammates who have worked out with him said the four-time scoring champion was back in top form and Durant quickly backed up their boasts in a mostly empty Barclays Center.

He made his first three shots, one a 3-pointer and another while being fouled, and was in double figures in fewer than five minutes. He did everything but keep up with Irving, who made three 3-pointers and had 17 points in 9 1/2 minutes of the opening quarter, when the Nets led by as many as 21.

No. 2 pick James Wiseman started at center despite his limited preparation and had 19 points and six rebounds.

Welcome back: Things to know about new NBA season

And ... it's back.

The NBA's new season starts Tuesday with a pair of games; Kevin Durant and the Brooklyn Nets welcoming Durant's former team in Golden State, while the defending champion Los Angeles Lakers open with the Los Angeles Clippers in the renewal of rivals who share a building.

For the first time since March, all 30 NBA teams are playing this week. When the season resumed in July, only 22 teams went to the NBA bubble at Walt Disney World in Lake Buena Vista, Florida. So, for eight teams—Golden State, Minnesota, Atlanta, Charlotte, New York, Chicago, Detroit and Cleveland—games will be played for the first time since March.

For others, it's the first time since August. Others, the first time since September. And for the Lakers and Miami Heat, who met in last season's NBA Finals, the offseason only started in mid-October.

The league has had 30 teams since 2004, and on Monday, NBA Commissioner Adam Silver suggested that it might be time to consider expansion once again. Extra teams would figure to mean extra revenue, and while nothing is imminent—really, it's years away if it happens—Silver did say that it is something under advisement.

For now and for the foreseeable future, though, the NBA is 30 teams. The first half of the season goes through March 4, the second half starts March 11 and runs through May 16, the play-in tournament goes from May 18 through May 21, the playoffs start May 22 and the last possible date for the NBA Finals is July 22.

All that is pandemic-permitting, of course. Everything is subject to change.

But Opening Night, at least, has arrived. Here's some of what to know going into this season:

MVP Giannis

Larry Bird, Bill Russell and Wilt Chamberlain are the only players in NBA history to win three consecutive MVP awards.

Milwaukee's Giannis Antetokounmpo has a chance this season to join their club.

The Bucks' star from Greece—and proud owner of a newly signed supermax extension—is already the first two-time MVP hailing from Europe and joined Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and LeBron James as the only players to win the award twice before turning 26.

LeBron and Curry's stats

LeBron James is about at the point where every game he plays creates a new entry in the NBA's record book.

He enters this season with 995 consecutive regular-season games with at least 10 points scored, the longest such run in NBA history and in position to reach the 1,000 double-digit games in a row milestone when the Los Angeles Lakers play at San Antonio on Dec. 30 — which just happens to be James' 36th birthday.

The last time James didn't have at least 10 points in a regular-season game was Jan. 5, 2007, when he was held to eight at Milwaukee.

Other milestones within reach for James this season: He's six triple-doubles shy of 100; 654 assists from 10,000; 759 points away from 35,000; and 1,448 minutes from 50,000.

Stephen Curry played in only five games last season with Golden State, part of the long list of injured players that derailed any chance the Warriors had of being competitive.

Curry returns this season and likely won't need long to move into No. 2 on the all-time 3-pointers made list. He enters with 2,495, just 65 away from Reggie Miller's total of 2,560.

Ray Allen holds the all-time mark of 2,973 makes from 3-point range. At Curry's current career pace of 3.6 made 3's per game, he would need 134 more games to catch Allen—which means the record could be his in the latter stages of the 2021-22 season.

All or nothing

The Miami Heat are either going back to the NBA Finals or missing the playoffs entirely.

That is, if the trend from the last seven seasons holds true.

Starting with San Antonio's loss in the 2013 finals, teams that lost the title series one year either go back to it the following year or completely miss the postseason. Of the last seven runners-up: The Spurs won the 2014 title, the Heat missed the 2015 playoffs, Cleveland won the title in 2016, Golden State won the title in 2017, the Cavaliers lost the finals in 2018 and missed the playoffs in 2019, and the Warriors missed the playoffs last season.

Milestone 3

Sometime in the coming days—possibly as early as Wednesday, more likely during the Christmas games Friday—someone will make the 500,000th 3-pointer in NBA history, including regular-season and playoff games.

There have been 499,549 made 3's in NBA history. At last season's pace of made 3's, with teams combining for almost 25 per game, the 500,000th would come during the matchup between the Dallas Mavericks and Los Angeles Lakers on Christmas night. ***(AP)***

Costs of Tokyo Olympics up by 22% to $15.4B

TOKYO (AP)—The official cost of the postponed Tokyo Olympics has increased by 22%, the local organizing committee said in unveiling its new budget on Tuesday.

In an online news conference, organizers said the Olympics will cost $15.4 billion to stage. This is up from $12.6 billion in last year's budget.

The added $2.8 billion is the cost of the one-year delay. Expenses come from renegotiating contracts and measures to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Olympics are to open on July 23. The Paralympics follow on Aug. 24.

Audits by the Japanese government over the last several years, however, show the costs are higher than officially stated and are at least $25 billion.

Tokyo said the Olympics would cost about $7.5 billion when the IOC awarded the games in 2013. A University of Oxford study this year said Tokyo is the most expensive Summer Olympics on record.

"The Tokyo Olympics are operating in a very tough environment," Toshiro Muto, the CEO of the organizing committee, said when asked about the record costs. Muto suggested the games should be looked at as an investment rather than a cost.

Japanese government entities are responsible for all of the costs except for $6.7 billion in a privately funded operating budget.

"The IOC and TOCOG (Tokyo organizing committee) want the public budget to appear as small as possible not only to guard against public criticism, but also to not discourage future candidate cities," Franz Waldenberger, director of the German Institute for Japanese Studies in Tokyo, wrote in a recent paper examining Olympic costs.

AP
In this April 28, 2020 file photo, a man with a face mask walks in front of Miraitowa and Someity, mascots for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics and Paralympics at a park in Tokyo.

Waldenberger noted the Tokyo city government and branches of the central government use the Olympics as "a window of opportunity to obtain additional" funding.

Organizers in October announced cost reductions of $280 million, cutting out frills including hospitality offerings. However, no cuts have been made to the sports program with a full complement of 11,000 athletes and tens of thousands of officials, judges, and sponsors expected to attend.

Muto acknowledged the cost had increased for the opening and closing ceremonies of the Olympics and Paralympics. Organizers were expected to report a figure later in the week. Japan's Kyodo news agency, citing sources close to the committee, reported the increase is about $33 million.

Decisions about fans and preventive measures for the pandemic are expected to be rolled out in the spring. Reduced fan numbers will affect ticket sales, a major source of income.

Japan has controlled COVID-19 better than most countries with 3,000 deaths attributed to the virus. That milestone was reached on Tuesday. New cases have been rising for a month, adding to public skepticism about the Olympics.

In a telephone poll of 1,200 people published this month by Japanese broadcaster NHK, 63% said the Olympics should be postponed again or canceled, and 27% said the games should be held. The poll was conducted on Dec. 11-13.

The IOC and local organizers have said the Olympics will be canceled if they cannot be held this time.

Local organizers are trying to recover some of the rising costs by coaxing more revenue from domestic sponsors. About 70 sponsors have already contributed a record $3.3 billion, driven by Dentsu Inc. the marketing agent for the Tokyo Olympics.

The Nikkei newspaper reported last week, citing unnamed sources "familiar with the matter," that 15 top-tier domestic sponsors will add an estimated $150 million to their contributions. It said Japan Airlines, ANA airline, and the Tobu Skytower were considering contributions.

Nikkei is also a Tokyo Olympic sponsor along with Japan's other leading newspapers Yomiuri, Mainichi, and Asahi. Several regional papers are also sponsors.

"We would like to increase revenue more than expected although it is challenging," Gakuji Ito, the organizing committee chief financial officer, said.

Ito said insurance coverage might pay out up to $500 million to help cover increased costs.

All expenses the organizing committee cannot cover will fall to the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, Ito said.

The budget shows the International Olympic Committee is contributing $1.3 billion to cover costs of the games. Its contribution to Tokyo will not increase, Ito said.

Ito was asked if he would seek more money from the IOC.

"No, we are not thinking about it," he replied.

The IOC's finances are stressed. It generates 91% of its income from selling broadcast rights and sponsorships. The postponement of the Tokyo Olympics has stalled its revenue flow, increasing the importance of staging the Olympics in Tokyo.

The Beijing Winter Olympics open six months after Tokyo closes, in February 2022.

The IOC is also under pressure to support national Olympic committees and international sports federations, many of which rely heavily on IOC contributions.

Struggling Steelers in midst of historic collapse

PENNSYLVANIA (AP)—The Pittsburgh Steelers have gone from dreams of matching the perfect 1972 Miami Dolphins to searching for another win.

After winning their first 11 games for the first time in franchise history, the Steelers were upset at home two weeks ago against Washington. That was followed by a loss at fellow AFC contender Buffalo before a humbling 27-17 defeat to last-place Cincinnati on Monday night.

The last team to start 11-0 and then lose three straight was the 1969 Rams in a 14-game season. The losing skid carried over to the playoffs with a 23-20 loss to Minnesota, a fate the Steelers would obviously like to avoid.

Pittsburgh would prefer to follow the path of the 2009 Saints, who won their first 13 games before losing the final three in the regular season. They recovered to win three in a row in the playoffs for the only Super Bowl title in franchise history.

With the loss in Week 13 to a Washington team that was 4-7 at the time and then this past week to a Cincinnati team that was 2-10-1, the Steelers became the first team in NFL history to lose multiple games when entering with at least 11 wins and playing a team with four or fewer.

The late-season collapse has opened the door for Cleveland to have a chance at winning the division. If the Browns beat the Jets on Sunday and the Steelers lose to Indianapolis, the Week 17 showdown in Cleveland will be for the division title. The Browns last won a division title in 1989, the longest current drought in the league.

No matter who wins the AFC North, the champion will be a team that missed the playoffs last season. Every year since 1977, with the exception of the strike-shortened 1982 season that had no divisions, has featured a division winner that missed the playoffs the previous season.

On the other end of the spectrum is the New York Jets, who lost their first 13 games before stunning the Los Angeles Rams, who came into the game with a 9-4 record, with a 23-20 victory.

It marked just the third time a team 0-13 or worse broke through for its first win against a team with a winning record. The Colts (0-13) beat Tennessee (7-6) in 2011 and the Raiders (0-13) beat the Patriots (9-3-1) in 1962.

Road warriors

With two weeks to play, home teams still have a losing record this season at 111-112-1. With many stadiums having no fans because of the coronavirus and others just having small crowds, the advantage of playing at home has been nearly nonexistent.

The last time a season finished with home teams having a losing record came in 1968, when home teams in the NFL went 49-59-4 (.454) and in the AFL went 34-35-1 (.493).

Meanwhile, from Kyler Murray to Lamar Jackson to the recent emergence of Jalen Hurts and the return to the field of Marcus Mariota, quarterbacks are having more success than ever running the ball.

Quarterbacks have rushed for 8,114 yards and 111 touchdowns this season with two weeks to play, the most in a season on record in NFL history. The previous high came in 2018 when QBs had 8,086 yards rushing and the TD mark had been 80 set last season.

Jackson leads the way with 828 yards rushing and seven TDs with Murray having 741 yards and 11 touchdowns. Murray has a record nine games this season with both a passing and rushing touchdown, and with 26 TD passes has joined Cam Newton in his 2015 MVP season as the only players to throw for at least 25 TDs and run for at least 10 in the same season.

Point differential is usually a good indicator of success in the NFL with good teams more apt to have lopsided wins that tilt that number in their favor. That hasn't been true of the Browns.

Cleveland (10-4) has been outscored by six points this season thanks to lopsided losses by more than 30 points to Baltimore and Pittsburgh coupled with seven wins by less than 10 points. There have been 318 teams in the Super Bowl era to win at least 10 of their first 14 games, and the Browns are the only ones to do it while being outscored. The previous low came in 2004 wen the 11-3 Falcons had only a plus-18 point differential through 14 games.

Messi breaks Pelé's all-time scoring record

SPAIN (AP)—Lionel Messi broke Pelé's all-time scoring milestone for their clubs by netting his 644th career goal for Barcelona on Wednesday, while Atlético Madrid beat Real Sociedad 2-0 to increase its lead of the Spanish league.

Messi, who helped Barcelona win 3-0 at Valladolid, had equaled Pelé's all-time scoring tally on Sunday. His 643rd career goal for Barcelona since his 2004 debut matched Pelé's tally for Santos from 1957-74.

For his 644th—Barcelona's third of the night—Messi had help from 18-year-old Pedro "Pedri" González.

After receiving the ball near the edge of the area, Pedri deftly rolled his boot over the ball to push it behind him to meet the Argentine's run. The slick pass left Messi clear to finally beat goalie Jordi Masip, who had denied with twice.

"When I began playing, I never thought I would break any record, much less the one I have surpassed today that belonged to Pelé," Messi wrote on Instagram. "I only want to give my thanks to all those who have helped me all these years, my teammates, my family, my friends and those who support me every day."

In a meeting between the front-runner and the sensation of the league this season, Atlético put on another dominant performance to show why it is the early title favourite.

Diego Simeone's team took full advantage of its best scoring opportunities and its defense remained airtight from start to finish.

Mario Hermoso headed in a free kick by Yannick Carrasco to put the visitors at San Sebastián ahead four minutes after halftime. Marcos Llorente put the result beyond doubt in the 74th with a powerful strike from the edge of the area.

Atlético moved three points clear of second-place Real Madrid. Sociedad was left in third place at six points adrift. The Basque Country club had led the league earlier this season but has now gone six rounds without a victory.

Barcelona stayed in fifth place at eight points behind Atlético.

Atlético has one more game to play than both Madrid and Barcelona and three more games to play than Sociedad.

Messi scored his team's final goal at Valladolid as Barcelona excelled in an experimental lineup by coach Ronald Koeman.

Koeman has tried several different lineups since he took over Barcelona last summer with the mission to fix a team that had hit rock bottom in a historic 8-2 loss to Bayern Munich.

After seeing his side not win away from home in four games, Koeman opted for his most profound makeover at Valladolid. He deployed a defense of three center-backs and kept Antoine Griezmann and Philippe Coutinho—the club's star signings in recent seasons—and midfield leader Sergio Busquets on the bench.

That left Martin Braithwaite alone to spear the attack behind two playmakers in Messi and Pedri. The scheme also allowed Sergiño Dest to attack deeper on the right flank.

ROLLERS

From Page 28

12 and 11 markers, respectively. Ervin Villarin also recorded double figures with his 10 points.

Khristian Itaas led Sun Palace with his 14 points, while A.J. Hudkins and Sunjoon Tenorio chipped in 8 apiece.

Meanwhile, in the lone boys U13 game last weekend, Rollers Red prevailed over Rollers Blue, 39-20.

Mike Mercado, Lance Lerio, and Jezpher Navarro teamed up in Rollers Red's victory after registering 13, 11, and 10 points, respectively. No Rollers Red broke into double figures, as its top scorer, Jared Villagomez, managed to make only 8 points.

Matches in the U13 division along with the three other age groups will continue this weekend.

MRA

From Page 28

their division.

Before heading back to their old turf, Alvarez and company utilized the Kan Pacific grounds and created temporary course for both adults and young riders. The Kan Pacific grounds provided a good alternate venue for MRA races, as the group worked on reviving motocross on island and getting back their former raceway in Marpi.

Then last October, the CNMI government through the Department of Public Lands and Department of Community and Cultural Affairs signed over the former CowTown Raceway land to MRA, paving the way for the motocross family's return to its old home and establishment of the Marianas Motocross Park.

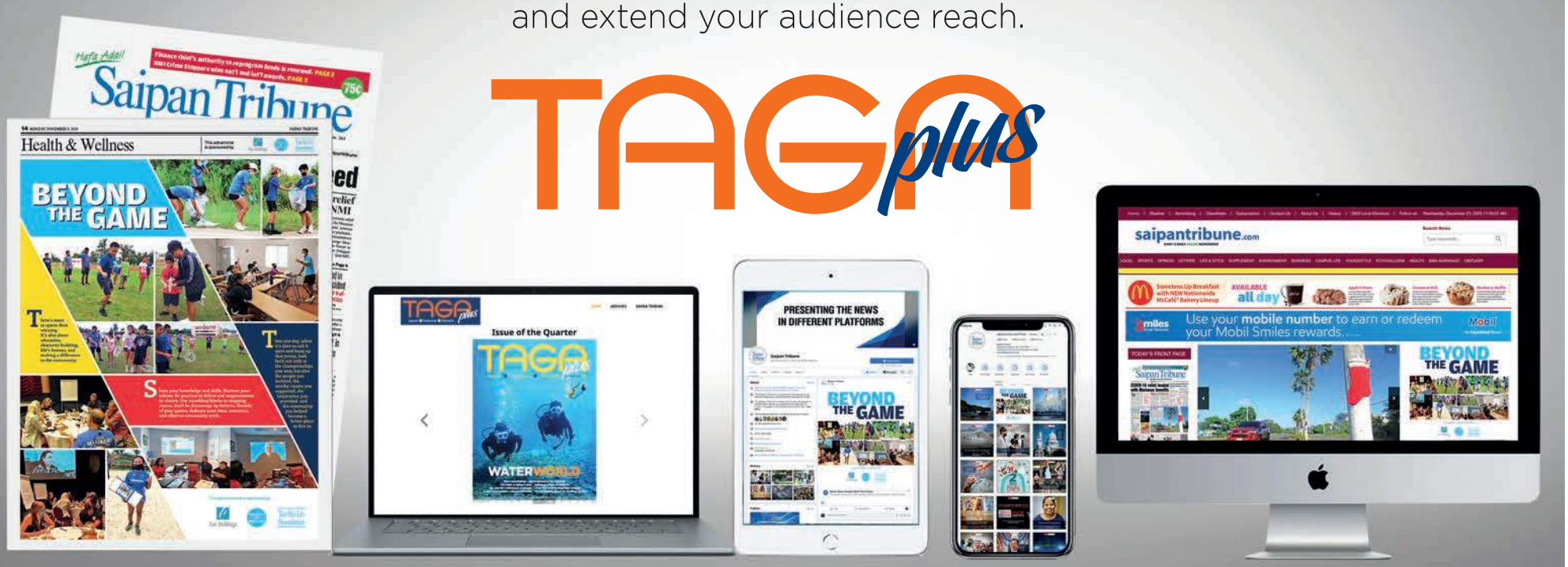
Cuki Alvarez, left, watches a young rider clear an obstacle during the Marianas Racing Association event at the former CowTown Raceway in Marpi. JOSEPH CHIN

Adult riders compete in the Expert Open class race. JOSEPH CHIN

ADVERTISE with us & save!

Expand your ad message across several channels and extend your audience reach.

TAGA plus


Saipan Tribune
Health & Wellness
BEYOND THE GAME
Issue of the Quarter
PRESENTING THE NEWS IN DIFFERENT PLATFORMS
saipantribune.com
Use your mobile number to earn or redeem your Mobil Smiles rewards.

Hafa Adai! Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

670.235-8747 www.saipantribune.com facebook.com/saipantribune saipantribuneoffical

George's 33 send Clippers past Lakers in opener

PAGE 25

Saipan Tribune
Sports

Costs of Tokyo Olympics up by 22% to $15.4B

PAGE 26

Lopsided wins in Rollers caging

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
roselyn_monroyo@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Lady Ol'Aces hammered Rollers Red, while five other teams also coasted to victory in the Rollers 2020 Holiday Tournament at the Koblerville Gymnasium.

The Lady Ol'Aces demolished Rollers Red in the women's division match last Monday, 46-25, to recover from their opening day loss to Rollers Blue.

After taking a 12-4 halftime lead, the Lady Ol'Aces kept going in the second half to complete the lopsided win.

In other results, Rollers Blue crushed the Chinatown Titans, 51-8, while the Ol'Aces pounded Rollers Red, 61-27, in a pair of boys U17 matches over the weekend.

Merrick Toves and Leo Naraja towed Rollers Blue to the 43-point win after scoring in double figures. Toves delivered 11 points, while Naraja chipped in 10, including two triples. Darren Pangelinan, Jay-Art Palmes, and Charlie McDonald combined for 19 more points for the winning squad.

While Rollers Blue ran their offense well, Chinatown struggled and had no player making more than one basket in the one-sided game.

In the other boys U17 match, the Ol'Aces got off to a strong start and never looked back to whip Rollers Red.

Airson Atan made 10 points in the first half, giving the Ol'Aces a 24-10 halftime advantage. The lead ballooned in the second half with Atan drawing help from Wino Willy, Craig Padayao, and M.J. David. Atan finished with 17 points, while Padayao also hit double figures with his 11 markers.

Aaron Magno had 8 points to pace Rollers Red.

The Ol'Aces also triumphed in the boys U19 division match last Sunday after topping Rollers Red, 69-43.

Jesstin Laniyo top-scored for the Ol'Aces with his 14 points, while Fiden Austin contributed 12. The Ol'Aces banked on their good outside shooting, knocking in eight shots from beyond the arc to beat Rollers Red.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Lady Ol'Aces, right, and Rollers Red players battle for the loose ball during their women's division game in the Rollers 2020 Holiday Tournament at the Koblerville Gymnasium last Monday.

Anthony Laraja had 12 markers to lead Rollers Red's losing cause, while Allen Morilla made 8 points.

In other results in the boys U19 division, Rollers Blue dominated Sun Palace last Saturday, 68-46.

Gringo Deleon Guerrero had 14 points for Rollers Blue, which also got double figures from Matt Richardson and Toves, who contributed

See ROLLERS on Page 27

MRA nearly done with raceway clearing

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
roselyn_monroyo@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Mariana Racing Association will continue to hold competitions at the soon-to-rise Marianas Motocross Park in Marpi as the course clearing is almost done.

"We will now continually race at our permanent home," MRA vice president Cuki Alvarez said, as they returned to the former CowTown Raceway last Sunday for the fourth leg of their series of competitive races.

"It was so awesome to race there again, brought back so many memories! The track is actually about 95% complete. We just need to trim a few more grassy areas. But we can totally race safely and the track is very smooth with lots of big jumps," Alvarez added.

Alvarez and the more than 20 MRA riders rounded the course several times last weekend with the MRA vice president topping the Expert Open class race. The same course was used in the kids races with Jonoah Santos, Therese Borja, and M.J. Camacho winning in the Peewee, ATV, and Minis 1 and 2 divisions, respectively.

"The kids raced the same track, a shorter version of it. We just basically cut the course in half and kept them on the infield," said Alvarez, who got his second win in the series after beating his son Shane and 10 other riders in

See MRA on Page 27

JOSEPH CHIN
Young riders navigate a flat course during last Sunday's Marianas Racing Association event at the former CowTown Raceway in Marpi.

JOSEPH CHIN
Adult riders in action in the Expert Open class.